

Raven Hill, three years ago.

Raven Hill, three years ago.

Yvonne always
keeps her books
in order that's
no coincidence.

The Talisman of
The Talisman of
Truth! Jesus Christ!
Truth! Jesus Christ!
It must have been
It must have been
hidden here for a
hidden here for a
century.
century.

Touching this
thing with my
Touching
bare hands
this thing
would be
with my bare
stupid as hell.
hands would
be stupid as
hell.

You're not
You're not alone.
alone. They
They are coming.
are coming.

The myth speaks of
its power to possess.

Shit, I can
feel it, I can.
They're close!
feel them.
They're close!

Oh my god
Oh my god,
HOSTIS!
HOSTIS!

DAMN!

T o o . .
Too
Strong...I
Strong...I
Can't
breathe!
breathe!

Give me
Give me pain!
you Give pain! me
Give me pain!
your pain!

A penny
for your u
won't feel
a thing...

Have to
Have to
reach my
reach my
gun!
gun!

What the fuck
is going on? fuck
They're fighting?
They're fighting
each other!

Give me
the felicit

You're not thinking pretty
about it, you're not. You have the
Talisman, but it won't
matter.

GACK!
GACK!

Shut up!
You shut up
You're not
real!

Why the
hell did they
fight each
other?
each
other?

What is
it I don't
know?

Fuck off!

You
know one
thing.
You're
gonna fail,
you always
do.
fail, you

Concerning the Genre

Role-playing games, especially those of the horror genre, have been somewhat stigmatized throughout history. Some people (mostly those who have no direct experience of RPGs) have pointed the finger at the hobby, claiming that it's subversive and outright dangerous. Well, no game, book, movie or any other kind of cultural entertainment of this kind is dangerous if the ones enjoying it are of a sane mind and of the right age for the genre.

Some have issues with horror games that cover subjects dealing with very real human cruelties. Why even touch these subjects with a ten-foot pole in a game? For me it has nothing to do with a morbid fascination or wanting to make use of shock value. I personally have a hard time to stomach some of these topics myself, but they scare me, and sadly they do occur in real life. This is in fact a horror game set in our modern day society, and therefore, I think it would be strange not to include the horrific parts of it; it would be like writing a war game without violence. The game doesn't center on these things as such, but they play their part, and they have inspired some creatures, realms and short stories. There is more to horror than slimy things in the dark.

Things I read in the papers scare me a hell of a whole lot more than any otherworldly monster story, disconnected from the world we live in, does. Human predators is one of my greatest fears, not just because of what they do but because they, in a sense, are us. We share the same basic genetic material, the same world, the same language, and yet they're beyond our comprehension and, according to me, utterly evil. Well, I have said my piece.

Mischa L Thomas

2014 addendum.

The game engine used in this version of Noctum is based on the engine that is utilized in the sci-fi horror game Cold & Dark. This is the fourth edition of the game and the first that do not use a variation of the original 2D10 system. There has been several other changes made to the mythology, stereotypes, and minions as well. The very first version of Noctum was designed in 2002 and published in Swedish.

Credits

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Thanks To

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Disclaimer

This is a game, nothing more. It's written to be entertaining and the views, ideas and concepts described are purely fictional. The chapter on magic and rituals does not describe real rituals and is not in any way an occult manual. The faiths and beliefs described have been inspired by existing faiths but in no way are they associated with this game and the beliefs have been reconstructed by the author to suit the game.

Religions and religious institutions that are mentioned have also been reconstructed using fantasy and fictitious ideas. There's no truth in their conspiracies and secret agendas. The views and presentation of religious faith, and how it's described, hold no credence whatsoever. Creatures, relics and alternate worlds described are also spawned by the imagination of the author.

The game delves into dark subjects that have been inspired by the perils of our modern society, but in no way is the intention of this to trivialize the sorrow, loss, and pain of those who have suffered. Abuse, violence, suicide and murder are terrible things and are by no way condoned by the author, publisher, or distributors of this game in real life. Some historical events are mentioned but the causes of most of those described in the game are fictitious.

The views presented in the game world description do not represent the view of the author or others associated with the creation or distribution of this game. If you have any trouble distinguishing a game from the real world you need professional help and should not spend your time playing or reading them. If you find any of the subjects in this game far too disturbing or upsetting you should not employ them in your game sessions. Those associated with the distribution, development, and production of this game are not responsible for any mental or physical damage that may come from reading or using this book in any way. If you're a concerned parent who is reading this, worried over what kind of thing your kid is reading, you should probably pay more attention to what your kid buys/downloads and reads instead of putting the blame on the creators, publishers or distributors of this game.

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GLOSSARY

AV: Armor Value, a value that is deducted from damage as it passes through or strikes an object.

D: Eight sided dice.

DMG: Damage inflicted by a weapon or attack measured in hit points.

DU: Durability, the amount of "hit points" an object can withstand.

HP: Hit points, a measure of the physical health of characters in the game.

NPC: Non Player Character, characters controlled by the storyteller.

PC: Player Character, characters controlled by the player (s).

PP: Psyche Points represents a characters mental hardness.

ROF: Rate of Fire.

Round/Turn: A short measure of time used to handle stressful and violent situations.

Scene: A timeframe that is determined by the storyteller or circumstances. A firefight can be a scene, so can a chase, social situation or crime scene investigation. They are used to structure the overall gameplay.

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME

"A role-playing game (RPG and sometimes roleplaying game) is a game in which players assume the roles of characters in a fictional setting. Players take responsibility for acting out these roles within a narrative, either through literal acting or through a process of structured decision-making or character development. Actions taken within many games succeed or fail according to a formal system of rules and guidelines."

- Wikipedia,
2014

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From the journal of Olivia Lake.

The house had stood empty for decades. The whole neighborhood had become derelict. After 1981, after the murders, the neighbors had moved, one by one. Not just because of what had happened, but because what had followed. The residents of this once-upscale neighborhood began to suffer from nightmares, incidents of domestic violence and suicides. It had spread like a disease. Now there was just me, the cold rainy night and the rats.

I waited until sundown to jump the fence; the local sheriff didn't want anyone snooping around. According to my research there were many failed attempts to demolish the area, create a park, but something always got in the way: sabotage, illness, one of the contractors had even killed himself. This is what I do: research haunted areas and urban legends as well as the history of real crimes. I'm a reporter of sorts. Part urban explorer, part writer and part photo journalist. I write everything from real crime articles to essays on modern day hauntings. Even the highest bidder doesn't pay that well so I freelance as a portrait photographer. But this night I was out on an investigative run. This night my life changed into an existence of dread and horror.

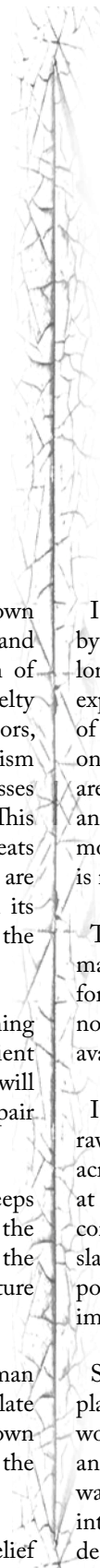
I got into the house by removing some rotten planks from one of the boarded up windows. The darkness was pressing. I didn't want to tip off the cops that I was here, just in case they drove by, so I used my video camera; a small compact thing with low light capabilities. Through the viewfinder screen the hallway glowed eerily green. I knew where I was headed: the attic. As I climbed the stairs to the second floor I recalled my research.

In 1981 Audrey Phye, aged twelve, had killed her father, mother and baby sister with a straight razor. Audrey was never found, only the razor bearing her prints. A substantial amount of her blood had been found in the attic, used to paint some kind of symbol. Her father had been the mayor back then and her mother a respected counselor. All good Catholics. After the murders the police found the tapes. It seemed that Audrey had been abused by her father for years. By reading her journal the investigators also learned that her mother knew about it but drowned her knowledge in pills and alcohol. It was a scandal the little town had wanted to forget as soon as possible. Since then the stories said that Audrey never had left, that she in fact took her own life in the attic and by invoking occult powers she had risen and taken out her vengeance. I wasn't a believer but I did love a juicy urban legend. And the true crime story alone would attract interest.

As I reached the upstairs hallway I found the attic hatch already open, the ladder folded down. I'd been to many places such as this but this time it felt wrong. My heart skipped a beat as I viewed the darkness beyond the open hatch, like a maw waiting to consume me. If only I had turned back then and there, trusted my instincts, but I didn't. I pressed on.

I scrambled up the ladder and swept the camera across the mostly empty space, occupied only by a few boxes and some rubble. Then I saw it. Through the thick layer of dust that covered the floor there was a dark pattern, a circle and some symbols. The sight of them set my teeth on edge. Audrey's blood, dried into the wood, still visible after all these years. But as I got closer I froze, my stomach curling into a cold knot. Through the camera screen I saw that the blood glistened some. It was fresh. In a panic I looked around, trying to see through the grainy picture on the screen, but there was nothing. When I swung the camera back to the blood, my heart began to race even faster. More blood had been smeared across the symbol and it now formed words:

Tag, you're it. . .



Noctum is a role-playing game that presents our own world through the gritty lens of survival horror and psychological suspense thrillers. It is a grim version of modern society. People know of the violence and cruelty that thrive outside their safety bolted apartment doors, and the government instills mistrust and spreads cynicism through the media. It is a way to keep the huddled masses distracted from society's real problems as a whole. This aggravates people's already deep-rooted fears. Threats of terrorist acts, mass shootings and serial killings are plastered all over the news; every report is brutal in its graphic representation. The nights grow longer and the days go by in a haze of gray.

At a first glance all you see is everyday life, but something is terribly wrong, and that something is a horror so ancient and powerful that even the strongest and sanest mind will crumble under its immense shadow, as it instills despair wherever it is cast.

The machinery of modern economic society keeps even paces with the waste-spewing factories of the industrial block. It is a pathetic attempt to extinguish the unquenchable thirst for material consumption. Nature suffers and revolts by drastically changing the climate.

A corruption so vile and greedy that it stains the human soul spreads like a wildfire in the cities, while the desolate houses in the countryside is a breeding ground for unknown shapes; born from the shadows cast in nightmares of the demented mind.

Crazed lunatics take the lives of innocents in the belief that it is the path to eternal life, a faith given to them by the whispers in their heads.

Incomprehensible governmental departments, motivated by misguided doctrines, work in obscurity to unearth long since gone and forgotten manuscripts. Biogenetic experimentation goes unchecked, as unscrupulous branches of hidden research and development laboratories have no one to watch over them. The representatives of the people are seldom better. Faceless politicians take nameless men and women to the backrooms, forcing them to commit the most depraved acts imaginable, and sometimes the victim is never seen again.

The wanton decay of society stems from the arrogance of mankind, which has paved the way for an unknown dark force. These grotesque beings have returned from exile and now rule our fate; and we let them. We fall under our own avarice and dull-wittedness.

In the darkest corner something awaits, something ravenous and relentless. Mutilated victims are dragged across the grime of gloomy back alleys to meet their end at the hands of the possessed. The molested and defiled corpses turn up days later bearing the marks of a ritualistic slaying. It is the darkness that guides the minds of the possessed and the flesh of the crazed. This darkness is an impatient one of many minds and guises.

Some humans have sold their very souls in return for a place alongside these forces, a guaranteed place in the new world to come; or so the misguided believe in their blind and fanatic worship. Others work alone in a more solitary way, killing specific victims in a degenerate, perverse and intricate manner concocted from feverish dreams in the dead of night. The killings have a purpose and a pattern; sometimes the murders themselves serve as keys to portals from which unnamable fears will emerge. The darkness has a sentience, it lives and often it won't even tolerate its own brethren.

THEME

Humanity as a whole lives in ignorance, unaware of the force that wishes to feed upon it. People are taught not to perceive these things by everyday normality and through the constricted thinking of science. It is a mindset of terrible denial. The most bizarre murders and slayings carried out by psychopaths and serial killers are seen as nothing more than awful crimes. Numerous times unimaginable influences guide the hand of these insane individuals, adding dark energies to the onslaught of unthinkable living fears.

Those who mutter theories concerning governmental conspiracies or supernatural forces are *obviously* crazy. Disappearances in the world of crime and the slums are barely noticed; no one cares or sees, and most cops can be paid to look the other way.

But circumstances do arise; letting some people see that which never should have been seen, things that by all intents and purposes shouldn't exist. In these moments the world that the afflicted once knew twists into a horrid reality of unknown fears, and they realize that they themselves have become outcasts. Misguided and frightened they try to tell others of what they have seen, but those who mutter about governmental conspiracies and supernatural forces are, as we all know, *obviously* crazy.

Alone, hunted and without hope, they are the only ones who can see the truth, and if they are lucky, are able to expose a small part of it. Their only means of survival is to find likeminded, those who have seen. Minds like their own that are unclouded by the vestiges of science and normality. They have to fight and they have to stay alive.

Theme and mood of the survival horror genre consist of some basic elements in combination. These are: Psychological pressure, isolation, blood-soaked brutality, paranoia, puzzle-solving mysteries, character-involved plotlines and gritty, shadowy well-planned environments.

Noctum is well adapted to be set in a large city. This provides a challenge for both the players and the storyteller, as all the horrible things and the characters' reactions to them often will be played out in a public setting. It can be quite disturbing for a player when his character is surrounded by people and starts to see signs of the grotesque. If no one else sees it a question arises: Is it really there, or does it only exist in his mind? How will the onlookers react when, in the middle of the movie theatre perhaps, the character starts to freak out, ranting and raving of twisted entities coming through the walls?

Isolation, the mindset of the underdog, and desperation are important key elements in pulling off survival horror in an open and public environment. Never underestimate the emotional impact of feeling alone in a crowd. Even so, classical environments like the evacuated town, isolated island or dark mansion should never be undervalued neither.

So what is really going on in the world, and why is this malevolent force here and on a rampage, driving all in its way mad by its onslaught? The short version to bring about the answer is mankind itself. Without humanity, and our natural capability to perform malicious acts, the darkness would not have locked our world in its hungry gaze.

It is a world of survival horror but the setting and horrors can only be explored and give a fulfilling experience through the characters you play. A large portion of the player-character-world interaction focuses on introspective exploration of the characters' minds, fears and forgotten sins. Without a strong mind, all will spin out of control, and as much as players need to focus on external threats they also have to be weary of the threat coming from within the very characters they play.

All of us have the capacity to succumb to depravity and get sucked in by the unseen evil. We fall victim to our own sins and inner weaknesses. What happens when the human mind confronts that which it cannot comprehend? Will it maintain its sanity or will it shatter and fall victim to the deluded madness of a broken soul?

Players will travel through the game portraying their characters. Characters in Noctum are often individuals with a shady past from which they cannot escape. Everyone carries a weakness that defines them; some deep-rooted remnant of what once was, and still stands to affect their lives. There are no heroes, only people that fate has given a chance to make a difference in the world, for better or for worse.

MANY SHADES OF GRAY

What defines an evil deed and what defines a good one? If one kills five evil men to save an innocent is that considered a good deed? Is it an evil deed to slay a good man to save five innocent children? Does the means justify the end? The notion of heroes isn't a part of Noctum in its strictest sense.

Still it is true that the characters are the protagonists of the story but this doesn't mean they are good. A debased pimp might investigate why his strung-out prostitutes turn up with their throats slit, but only so he can keep his stable full and make more money. Players that wish to play traditional heroes may do so, but it is an ungrateful road to walk in a world of corruption, greed and survival horror.

The living darkness that threatens humanity is unquestionably evil from our point of view, but what actions on the characters' part are good and which are evil? No apparent scale of conscience exists and it is up to the players to define and question what makes a choice good or evil. In Noctum all issues of morality exist in many shades of gray, elusive by nature and almost impossible to define. Right from wrong is a hard thing to discern, especially when viewing the world through the eyes of the characters.

Storytellers are confronted with the task of challenging the player's sense of moral; making it hard to define right from wrong. This will introduce a mindset of uncertainty and emotional suspense, adding to the gloomy feel of the survival horror genre.

CONCEPT

Everyone experiences fear differently, and also finds different types of horror unsettling. One person may get the chills from gory details, while another person's heart rate goes through the roof when presented with a psychological suspense thriller.

It shouldn't matter what kind of character a player creates, all stories and professions should be made equally interesting and inspiring. When it comes to role-playing games, horror is one of the hardest genres to pull off. The players and the storyteller really need to work together in order to make it run smoothly. When running a horror game, timing is just about everything, and often the depth of the characters and how the players act them out are pivotal. There are many ways one can run a game of dread. There's everything from overt hack-and-slash games to the subtle suspense thrillers. The search for arcane knowledge can (and should) be made as exciting as action sequences. The style of course depends on the characters. Sometimes it is possible to run one type of game, but often the storyteller needs to mix it up, as characters tend to be a diverse group. It is all about being able to give the players what they want, and having the tools and imagination to do so. Do they thirst for the unholy blood of demons while walking down a dark corridor sporting two automatic guns? Maybe it is more appealing to engage in ritualistic summoning, and paranormal experimentation, or do they wish to hunt down serial killers and missing persons in remote areas of modern civilization?

Behind it all, beneath the tactile surface of the known world, ancient fears and depraved desires given perverse life awaits. Darkness surrounds the world but not only do the characters have to confront its horrid embodiments; they have to confront the twisted shadows of their inner selves. Mental illness, sexual deviations, murderous impulses and adrenaline unleashed slumber in the outer rims of their subconscious. Your worst enemy is your inner darkness. Can you maintain control or do you fold, giving heed to your darker self? Will you become what others fear, a decadent wretch laying waste to the lives of others, leaving behind a trail of blood and sorrow with those you defile and degrade? Maybe all you have seen really is nothing more than the product of your demented mind in the grip of psychosis?

BASIC RULES

It is impossible to create a game mechanic that encompasses all conceivable situations, and storytellers should never be afraid of changing rules, or employ their

own, to suit the needs of the group and situations that may occur. The rules of *Noctum* aren't meant to simulate the real world; rather they represent the fictitious reality of the game.

All games have rules by definition and these serve as a platform for resolving different problems. Most things characters go about in their everyday life don't call for rolling of dice but when actions dependent on skills and aptitudes have a consequence that is important to the story, the rules should be implemented. Even so, rules should never be allowed to stand in the way of role-play or the mood but rather add to them. Only use the rules when you feel it is appropriate and adds to the suspense of the game.

ACTIONS

This is a broad term that is used to describe when a character does something of consequence to the story that involves the mechanics. Deciphering an ancient cryptogram is an *action*, and so is firing a gun. Actions can be of any length. Firing a gun takes but a second, while hacking a computer system takes much longer. Many actions are resolved using *rolls*.

ROLLS

In order to assess if something succeeds, *Noctum* makes use of rolls. The dice employed are eight-sided dice. These are used for every roll and are hereafter simply referred to as a "D". So "2D" is equal to two eight-sided dice.

When you want to make a roll, you combine the appropriate Aptitude with a fitting Skill to create a dice pool, then roll a number of dice equal to the value of those numbers. When making pure Aptitude rolls, you count the Aptitude as double and make the roll. So if you have to roll your Brawn and have a score of 2, it would count as 4.

There are two basic types of rolls: Aptitude rolls and Skill rolls. If rolling for a Skill in which you have no score, you would roll the active Aptitude alone. This, however, would still count as an Skill roll and you wouldn't double the Aptitude, as you would with an Aptitude roll.

The goal is to have as many of the dice as possible to match or exceed the target number. The target number is always 7, though occasionally the abilities or extreme Aptitude scores of some creatures allow them to modify this number. Each die that comes up a 7 or an 8 is considered a "success". If the target number isn't matched or exceeded by any of the rolled dice (i.e., no successes are rolled), the roll fails.

Aptitude rolls: Aptitude x 2

Skill rolls: Aptitude + Skill

Example 1 (Skill roll without a Skill rank): Branch 94 agent Jerry Sage is driving down the rain slicked night streets. He is taking fire from a group of domestic terrorists which he has linked to a fanatic cult. They are well armed and throws a grenade. The explosion erupts just a couple of meters in front of the agent's car and he has to swerve in order to avoid it. The storyteller decides that the Aptitude in question is Reaction and the skill is of course Driving. However, Jerry don't have any points invested in Driving, so he must use his Reaction alone, which is 3. So with that the player gets to roll 3D. He scores 4, 8 and 2, one success total. He manages to stay on the road in hot pursuit of the terrorists.

Example 2 (Skill roll with a Skill rank): Agent Jerry Sage is an ex SWAT member and as such a skilled marksman. He is about to snipe a terrorist that is standing on guard outside their base of operations at the docks. He has an Attention score of 3 and a Shooting score of 4. Attention 3 + Shooting 4 gives him a dice pool of 7. He scores 7, 6, 4, 8, 7, 1 and 2, which makes three successes. The silenced high-powered sniper round tears through the terrorist's head in a grisly display of bone, brain matter and blood.

Example 3 (a straight Aptitude roll): Jerry walks into an apparently empty room. The player doesn't state that he's looking for anything, but there's a crazed cultist in hiding. Even if the character isn't actively looking, there's a chance that such a thing will be discovered reflexively. The storyteller decides to roll Jerry's Attention in order to see if he discovers the zealot. Jerry has 3 in Attention. When used in an Aptitude-only roll, Aptitudes are doubled, so the storyteller rolls 6D for Jerry's Attention.

MODIFIERS

The difficulty of an action depends on the circumstances. When things get easier, a positive modifier is applied. This adds a varying number of dice decided by the game rules and/or the storyteller. An increased dice pool also means an increased chance of success. If something is harder a negative modifier applies, which decreases the pool and makes it more difficult to succeed. Modifiers are cumulative.

If a dice pool is ever reduced to zero or less, the player still gets to roll 1D. If this roll fails, it counts as a "botch", as the circumstances are so extreme.

A dice pool can never exceed 8. When it does, every extra die is counted as a success after a successful roll has been made. These surplus dice have been locked. When negative modifiers apply, this "surplus" is reduced first.

Example 1 (negative modifier): Jerry is sneaking past two cultists. He has a total pool of 8 in Quickness + Stealth. But the cultists are high-strung and on their toes since they received a report that there might be an intruder about. The storyteller decides that Jerry gets a -2 to his dice pool, reflecting the guards' alertness, leaving him at 6D.

Example 2 (positive modifier): Having survived an encounter with a bunch of Unholy Reverends using his magnum revolver, private investigator Stanley sees a lone Unholy feeding off the corpse of a police officer. Stanley levels his handgun and aims. The storyteller tells the player that he gets a +1 modifier because he took the time to aim. His Attention + Shooting rank is 6, but with the modifier his rank increases to 7.

Example 3 (a pool beyond 8): Jerry has an Attention + Shooting score of 7, and he aims at a cultist long enough to get a +2 modifier. This gives him a pool of 9 dice. The player gets to roll 8 dice and on a successful roll he gains an extra success for the surplus above 8. If he would have had a pool of 10 he would have gained two extra successes after a successful roll. If a negative modifier would be applied, the surplus dice would be the first to drop.

AUTOMATIC AND OBVIOUS SUCCESSES

When there's no stress, a character can succeed automatically at an action. If the player's dice pool (including modifiers) exceeds or equals the target number, it's an automatic success (any combat action is considered stressful and thus cannot automatically succeed). The success is minimal and takes the maximum amount of time, but it gets done. If the player wants to hurry things up, he can take a chance with a dice roll. This is a mechanic that the storyteller can use to calibrate the flow of a story, shifting it from dice-heavy to a more narrative style when it suits the gameplay.

Then there are *obvious actions*. Climbing up a perfectly good ladder without any stress or hindering conditions can be done by anyone, even if they don't have the dice pool to pull it off automatically. Use common sense regarding obvious actions.

Example: The antiquarian Jamal Kittredge is deciphering an ancient occult passage. He has a total score of 8 for this action. Jamal is currently in an abandoned, closed down library and there are no distractions, stress or any other factors that might put pressure on him. As his dice pool more than equals the target number (7) and there's no stress, he can automatically decipher the passage. However, it takes some time since he's working slowly and methodically in order to get it right.

Example 2: Rachel DeLuca, an ex special forces soldier, is trying to fix up her jeep as it was damaged in an accident. The vehicle isn't too badly damaged and she has high-quality tools. However, she only has a total dice pool of 4 for the roll. But since she's in no hurry, has the right tools and the storyteller knows that the characters will need the car to move the story forward, he decides to give Rachel a +3 modifier. Since the final number is equal to the target number, 7, she succeeds.

KEY INVESTIGATIVE SCENES

When the characters find themselves in a scene where there are clues that they need to uncover in order to move forward they will *always* be able to find the clue if they apply the right skill. The reason for this is simple: there is no point for the story to stop dead in its tracks because of a single failed roll. These instances are called *key investigative scenes*. Rolls made during these scenes seldom comes with a negative modifier. During a key investigative scene the players still need to figure out what skills and trainings they should use. If they are creative, they might be able to use a skill you hadn't considered to obtain the clue. Testing skills during key investigative scenes work a bit differently: No matter the result of the roll, the action will always succeed, but the roll determines how well it succeeds. A failed roll only means that the character find the clue but that it takes a while and he only manages to discern the bare minimum information which is needed to move forward. However, a successful roll might yield more insights and add some flair to the character's performance, depending on success rate. The greater the number of successes the greater the insight a character gains into the matter he investigates. Keep in mind that the player must investigate the area with the right (or equivalent) skill needed to find the clue and apply the correct training. Thus the player still has to be proactive and use his smarts, utilizing his character's resources in the right way at the right time. See Handling Investigations on page 278 for more information on how to create and handle clues.

NUMBER OF SUCCESSES AND RESULT:

0 or less: The character finds only the most vital information.

1: The character obtains an additional clue or piece of deductive information.

2: Even more profound deductions are possible, maybe intuitive speculations outside the field of the skill used.

3-4: Very impressive additional information is found which might lead to other key investigative scenes directly.

5+: Sherlock Holmes has nothing on you!

Example: Kate Vance is a homicide detective and she has walked into a condemned building where a body has been found. The victim was killed, cut to pieces and sewn together again and placed in a position of prayer, held in place by wires and metal pipes in front a wall smeared with snake symbols and glyph-like markings. Kate's player says that he wants to use the Investigation skill to carefully gather evidence and examine the scene. The character has a total rank of 7 for this roll and the player tosses the dice. As it is a **key investigative scene**, Kate will succeed automatically. The player rolls the dice and manages to score 3 successes. The storyteller looks at the total success rate chart: **3-4: Very impressive additional information is found**



which might lead to other key investigative scenes directly.

The most vital information is a fingerprint and that the man wasn't killed here and died through exsanguination (a precise cut in the femoral artery). Since the roll succeeded so well, the storyteller passes the player a note with additional information and insights. The character even receives information outside her normal scope intuitively as she succeeded so well. Kate's player relays the information to the other players through role-play as the character walks the scene.

"He wasn't killed here, there is too little blood for that, but he died of blood loss. One clean cut to the femoral artery, near surgical precision. I also found this print on the face of his watch. Might be the victim's but we should check it out." I stand and ponder for a while, looking at the symbols on the wall, back at the body and then turn to the other investigators. "These symbols remind me of hieroglyphs, and wasn't there something in the myths about Set and Osiris which involved dismemberment and resurrection or some such thing? The city museum is having an exhibition focusing on ancient Egypt this week. It started yesterday. A hell of a coincidence..."

The character managed to connect the dots in such a way that the group is now moving on to the museum directly, skipping some steps and downtime. So when creating key investigative scenes, have them well-prepared beforehand.

BOTCH

If a roll results in no successes and if half of the dice (or more) are 1s, it's considered a *botch*. In this case, the worst possible result occurs. The gun jams or breaks down while firing it, the climber loses his grip and falls, etc. The storyteller is the judge of what happens when a botch occurs.

Example: *Jerry Sage is cornered by four death cultists that charge him. He readies his revolver and is about to open fire. The player rolls, but he scores no successes. Even worse, three of the six dice come up as ones. CLICK! The storyteller says that the gun has jammed. It seems as if Jerry is about to get caught and sacrificed to the dark gods...*

CONTESTED ROLLS/TESTS

Contested rolls are relevant when two opposing parties are pitted against each other. The two involved parties make a roll with the appropriate dice, and whomever acquires the most successes wins. This can also be done as an *extended contest*, where the involved parties try to accumulate the highest number of successes with a limited amount of rolls. Extended contests are best used to heighten suspense with the aid of the game mechanics.

In the event of a tie, the one with the highest Skill rank wins. If it's still a tie, the one with the highest active Aptitude score wins. If both Aptitudes and Skills are tied, each participant rolls 1D and add their Skill rank until the tie is broken.

Example 1 (contested roll): *Olivia Lake, a young journalist, tries to hold the door shut while a knife wielding psychotic tries to push it open. Olivia has a Brawn score of 2 (which gives her 4 dice, since Aptitudes are doubled when making pure Aptitude rolls) and the madman has 3 in Brawn which gives him a pool of 6 when rolling. Olivia rolls her 4D while the psychotic rolls his 6D. Olivia scores 2 successes, while the maniac scores 4. Olivia tumbles back screaming as the door is busted open.*

Example 2 (extended contest): *Cain Duges is a drug dealer, and he is currently involved in a high-speed boat chase on the river. The henchmen of a rivaling dealer is trying to hunt him down and kill him. They are currently side by side and both are trying to get through a narrow passage between two large rocks, but only one of them will be able to make it through the gap; the other will crash and burn. To heighten the suspense the storyteller declares that the boaters will make three rolls each (instead of doing just the one). Whichever side accumulates the most successes with three rolls wins. They start to roll. On the first roll, they're tied with two successes. On the second roll, Cain has managed to accumulate four successes, while the raider has five. There's one roll left. Who will get through and who will crash and burn? Both sides roll their dice.*

WORKING TOGETHER

Up to four people can work together on a problem at the same time. The one with the highest Skill rank acts as the anchor, making the roll. Each participant beyond the anchor adds +1 to the roll. Not all actions can be done together, and generally no more than four people can work on the same action at once. The storyteller must decide what is appropriate, as it varies depending on the situation at hand.

Example: *Senior homicide detective Kate Vance is investigating a murder scene in an old abandoned rail yard. She has two junior officers assisting her. Detective Vance has a total pool of 6 in Attention + Investigation. However, since she has two assistants (both of them have a lower score than Vance) that are skilled in Investigation, she gains +1 for each assistant, for a total +2 bonus. They work as a team and have a combined pool of 8 (Vance's pool of 6 + 2), increasing the chance of success.*

Note on Brawn: *When Brawn is pooled, every extra person adds +1 to the "power chart", +2 if he or she possesses a Brawn score of 4 or more. Then it's just a matter of making a normal Brawn roll, counting successes from the new level on the chart. See Actions That Need Detailing for more information regarding the power chart.*

REDUCTION TIME

Some actions have a *reduction time* and a *base time* attached to them. Base time measures how long it takes to perform the action, while the reduction time measures how much time each success reduces the base time with. Then there is a *minimum time*. This gauges the minimum amount of time the action must take, no matter the result on the dice. If a minimum time isn't stated, it's counted as half the base time of the particular action. Reduction time is a way to measure the vastness and complexity of an action, and this is depicted with a Magnitude which goes from 1 to 6. The higher the magnitude, the more time consuming the action will be. The examples here are merely suggestions and the table is meant to act as a guide. It can be used to determine how long it takes to write a book, finish a sculpture or conduct an archeological dig. Make your own changes and additions to the timeframes and actions in order to make your game come together. The table below is not finely scaled, but rather gives a snapshot of some situations. A large project, such as a vast scientific project, might require that the character succeeds with several of these instances.

If the roll is unsuccessful it simply means that the character spent the entire base time performing the action but was unsuccessful in making any progress. See *Actions That Need Detailing* for more information.

MAGNITUDE	BASE TIME	REDUCTION TIME	MINIMUM TIME
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1: Setting a simple password, picking a plain

2: Exchanging a blown out fuse, picking an average lock, bypass a very simple house alarm.	5 minutes	1 minute	1 minute
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3: Translating a page of text, solving an average cipher or anagram, hacking a simple computer system, fixing a smaller engine problem, picking a security lock/ small wall safe, bypassing a average security system, search a small apartment, investigate a simple crime scene in a finite	20 minutes	5 minutes	5 minutes
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4: Translating a couple of pages of text, solving a challenging cipher or anagram, breaching a safe, hacking a secure computer system, investigate a murder scene, conducting minor surgery, performing a medical or scientific experiment/examination, restore a larger or smaller but severely damage archeological find.	1 hour	10 minutes	30 minutes
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crime scene, performing major surgery,

6: Exhuming a mass grave and matching the remains, hacking a multi layered computer system with a highly advanced polymorphic code, repair a badly smashed up car, conducting multi-staged scientific/ medical research.	12 hours	1 hour	6 hours
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Example: Jamal Katreage has run across a relic which is inscribed with 1700-Sindanic script. He wishes to translate it and employs his linguistic training. The storyteller tells the player that the he has to roll his Brains + Academics score, which is a total of 7. The storyteller also tells him that the action has a magnitude of 5 (base time 6 hours, reduction time 30 minutes, minimum time 3 hours) as the language is so obscure. He also gets a -2 modifier (reducing his pool to 5) as the carvings have been ravaged by time. The player rolls the dice and manages to rack up 2 successes. As each success shaves off 30 minutes due to the reduction time the base time of 6 hours is reduced to 5 hours. The storyteller describes how Jamal sits in his candle lit library, poring over the script in the stormy night. The player has no idea what horrors his character is about to unleash...

INTERRUPTED REDUCTION TIME

If a character is interrupted while performing an action that has a reduction/base time he can usually pick up where he left off. The storyteller decides how much time is left and sets an appropriate base- and reduction time.

THE DO-OVER

This rule for successive attempts at an action should be used with some care. It's never in play when executing attacks, flight maneuvers, sneaking or in any other situation where a failure will result in a direct and swift consequence, but it should apply when the PC is engaging in something that is time-consuming and in need of some focus. This includes actions such as picking a lock, fixing an engine or translating a text. If the first roll fails, the player can roll a second time, only he will get a -2 on the roll. If this fails as well, he can try a third time, but now gets a -3 penalty. After this, he's too frustrated and has to take a step back. If the action has a base time, half of this time is required as a "cool down period" before the PC can start over with a clean slate.

A MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Every die that comes up a 7 or an 8 is counted as a success. If it's not a contested roll, one success is enough for the action to be considered successful. Additional successes (multiple 7s or 8s) indicates a greater degree of success: additional damage if attacking, reduced time for repairs and so on. Not every roll will benefit from additional successes, but most will. Just a handful of the myriads of possible situations are covered in this book, which means that the storyteller will have to come up with appropriate solutions at times.

For example, when conducting a crime scene investigation you might decide that each success will turn up a piece of forensic evidence or clue. When conducting an interview, each success might represent an additional piece of information.

FAILURES CAN BE INTERESTING

You should always be able to imagine where a failed roll might lead. Sometimes a failure doesn't result in anything special, other than a missed shot that gets lodged in the wall or a missed chance to up the selling price in a negotiation. But at other times a failure will yield an interesting story twist or circumstance.

Example: *Huxley has been chased down an old decrepit sewer system by a death cult looking to sacrifice her. She is doing her best to pry away a rusted set of metal bars that is cutting her off. The cult members are hunting her and closing fast, so she has to hurry, meaning she can't take an automatic success. She fails miserably, the bars are simply too sturdy. The storyteller tells the player that Huxley noticed an overgrown drainpipe some steps back. And it is big enough for her to fit through. She has a chance of reaching it before the cultists see her, if she makes a run for it. She hauls ass and manages to dive down the filthy pipe seconds before the cultists run past it, barely missing*

her. She lands in dirty knee-deep water. She stands up, finding herself in a wide sewage tunnel. Strange roots and vines cover the walls. Suddenly she hears a screeching hiss. Something big and unnatural is alive down there with her. She doesn't have to worry about the cultists for now, but as she draws her gun and sees movement further down the tunnel, she realizes that she might have been better off fighting them instead.

The example above shows how a failure can lead to an interesting situation. The tunnel will lead to the same place as the door she couldn't get through, but the journey is far more perilous. You can plan for some of these failures but at other times you can wing it by keeping alert and concentrating on building entertaining scenes.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

For Your Information are presented in the end of most chapters. They are tips, hints and suggestions on how one can change rules, use concepts and so forth. If you're not used to role-playing they can seem a bit confusing, at least those dealing with rules. Sometimes an FYI might basically say: "You know the whole chapter you just read? Ignore it and come up with your own rules if you don't like it; here are some tips on how to throw the entire game mechanics to the dogs and still have a good time." As this too is an "FYI" this also has something to say: If you find FYIs confusing or unhelpful, ignore them.

CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERS

From the journal of Olivia Lake

Now I knew that there were unexplainable things out there, impossible creatures. Someone had been following my work, my stories about the urban legends. And they had contacted me. I wasn't alone anymore and maybe there was a way to understand, to survive the mysteries.

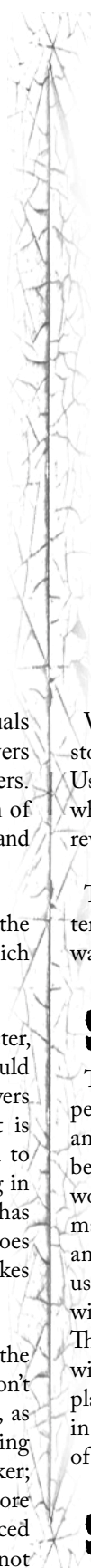
Victor Legard was an ex-cop, a kind of expert in forensic accounting. He now worked as some freelance insurance claims agent and private investigator. I remembered reading about him in the papers some months back; he had been fired for taking bribes. And the man was probably an alcoholic, the way he tossed back those whiskeys. He loosened his tie and rolled up his sleeves as he watched Caleb hack into the shipping manifest.

I had known Caleb for a long time, but only by the name of "Antiviral," his alias on the web. He was one of my contacts, and the one who had brought me to his apartment after he understood that I was in trouble. He was a digital anarchist and conspiracy theorist, or rather a conspiracy expert as it seemed that a lot of the crazy shit he believed in was true. Like all conspiracy theorists, he was a bit paranoid.

I wasn't the only woman in the group. Huxley was about ten years older than me, mid-thirties. She presented herself as a bodyguard, but I pegged her as an enforcer. The four teardrop tattoos under her eye and the spider web tattoo on her shoulder indicated that she had killed as well as done time. She made me uncomfortable, but having someone around that could handle herself felt kind of prudent. She just stood there, dead-eyed and stone-faced, leaning against the desk. She only moved her head when Silak walked through the door.

To me, Silak was the biggest mystery, some shifty antiques dealer and occultist. He muttered a lot of weird shit about a living darkness and constantly popped pain pills. One time I heard him talk with himself. With, as in having an actual conversation. Caleb trusted the guy, however, and said that Silak had saved his life on more than one occasion.

These people were my new confidants and brothers in arms, an odd mix of experiences, temperaments and skill sets. I knew that we wouldn't always get along, and some of us might never become actual friends, but in the face of the horrific mysteries now revealed to me, I knew that they would become the most important people in my life. And as I stood there, watching them, I could only imagine what they thought of me. I guess I wasn't really the catch of the year. Twenty-three years old, scared shitless and wielding a camera and a pen. . .



In Noctum the most important and detailed individuals in the plotline are the characters of the players. The players collaborate with the storyteller to create the characters. Technically, characters are nothing more than a bunch of numbers on a piece of paper, but if they are detailed and rigorously fleshed out they become so much more.

Characters in Noctum have some major issues in the form of weaknesses. This gives them an inner depth, which defines them. This makes them interesting to depict.

It isn't very hard or time-consuming to create a character, but players often take their time and the storyteller should let them. As these are the fictitious individuals the players will portray in a hostile world of survival horror, it is important that they can feel some sort of connection to their characters. Characters will probably have nothing in common with the person portraying them, but a player has to understand his character. What drives him, what does he want, what kind of childhood did he have? What makes him tick?

It is important that the storyteller sits down with the player during the creation process. Some characters won't fit the stories the storyteller has lined up and players, as well as storytellers, have to compromise. A story focusing on the occult and ancient relics might not suit a hacker; but a relic hunter or private investigator would be more in line with such a story. Likewise, a tale about advanced biogenetic research and AI technology gone mad may not suit a relic hunter, but would be perfect for a hacker or crazed scientist.

When players create their characters they and the storyteller have to decide if the characters share a past. Usually it is easier to get started if they do but a prelude where the characters meet for the first time can also be a rewarding experience.

The creation of characters follows certain steps and some terminology and systems will need explanation along the way.

STEP 1: THE INDIVIDUAL

The kind of individual you wish to play, and what kind of personality traits that defines him and gives him drive, are an essential part in the creation of a character. You should be able to describe the core of your character with three words. What kind of a person is he? Grumpy, secretive, manipulative, violent, questing, gloomy, aggressive, happy, angry and vengeful, are examples of words that might be used to describe a character. Choose carefully as these traits will make up the foundation of your character's personality. The personality traits don't really have anything to do with the game mechanics as such, but when creating and playing your character, you should always keep these traits in mind. It gives you something to fall back on in the ways of role-playing and motivation.

STEP 2: STEREOTYPES & CONCEPT

Stereotypes are an easy way of fleshing out the general outlines of the character. They deal with known archetypes inspired by books, other role-playing games, movies,

videogames and other sources. All of them sketched out to fit in survival horror and suspense thrillers.

Players don't have to choose any of the stereotypes, but they are useful tools. Always have your character's personality traits in mind when you choose. An individual that excels when confronted with a scientific riddle is hardly going to be a hardcore criminal, but such juxtaposition might present an interesting character as well. After choosing a stereotype you should make some notes on how the character ended up in his walk of life.

STEP 3: WEAKNESSES

Weaknesses are important in Noctum and every character must choose at least one. These consist of dark passions, mental illnesses, abusive behavior, curses or other intensely harrowing aspects that shape the life of the characters.

Weaknesses are often the result of terrifying experiences in the character's life. Some have their roots in the character's childhood; others are more recent. Different situations trigger weaknesses and they have the ability to take a hold of a character. Abusers start to abuse, drug addicts shoot up and sexual deviants have to indulge in their deviation. These things are deeply rooted in the character's psyche and never leaves him alone.

Most stereotypes come with recommended weaknesses. Often one or more of them will be highlighted using bold text. This is a weakness that should be taken when playing the stereotype it pertains to. Highlighted weaknesses pretty much define the concept and feel of that particular stereotype. Also, at least one highlighted weakness has to be at a severe or a mediocre level (see chapter on weaknesses).

Anyhow, every character has to choose at least one weakness. If only one is selected the level of the weakness has to be severe. It is recommended that beginning characters don't have more than four weaknesses, since it can be hard to play a character that is too messed up from the start.

STEP 4: BACKGROUND

How did your character become the person he is today, and how did he get his personality? To get to the bottom of this you should go back to the childhood of your character. When compiling a background it is best to do so step by step. Describe loosely how the character's life was when growing up, and go into detail on such events that made an impact on the development of your character's personality, or brought about a weakness. It is important to have the years and dates of these occurrences since people that might have met the character in a bad time of his life will have the memory of him under those circumstances. This means that people will react differently to him as they have met him during different periods of his life.

The background doesn't need to be an essay but it is good to have a general notion of what the character's life was like; and most importantly, detail how and when he got his weaknesses. Most weaknesses originate from some kind of trauma, ranging from dabbling in the occult to being brutally molested by a family member.

It is also good to make some kind of list of the most important people in the character's life. This gives him a feeling of being connected to the world and also provides the storyteller with seeds for stories. Short descriptions can help to illustrate the nature of the relationship between both parties. *"I never got along with my father. He always came home drunk in the evenings and smacked the shit out of mom and me. Everyone knew it but did nothing. I heard the bastard is still alive. Haven't met him in ten years."* Such a short description gives a vivid and clear picture of a severely dysfunctional and tragic childhood. Take the time to make some minor notes of ex girl/boyfriends, school bullies and friends the character haven't met in years. This gives a depth and dimension to the character.

STEP 5: APTITUDES

When creating character, all purchases are done on a one-for-one basis up to rank three. This is true for both Aptitudes and Skills. For example, if you spend 3 Aptitude points on Brains, you'll get an increase of 3 in your Brains score. Buying from rank 4 to 5 cost 2 points when dealing with Aptitudes. Everyone starts with one rank in each Aptitude.

Buy Points

Aptitudes: 12

APTITUDES

Some things you're born with, such as innate intelligence, strength or a way with people. These are the things that Aptitudes represent. If you're naturally smarter it will be easier to use Skills that require a certain intellect. There are eight different Aptitudes: *Attention, Brains, Brawn, Clout, Cool, Gut Feeling, Quickness* and *Reaction*. The scale below gives you an insight into what the numbers mean.

* Poor

** Average

*** Oh, you're good.

**** You're a credit to the human race.

***** Who's the perfect specimen? *You're the perfect specimen!*

ATTENTION

This measures a person's overall perception and represents the five senses as well as the talent to catch details. Sharpshooters and investigators alike can make good use of this Aptitude.

BRAINS

Logic and book smarts is the realm of this Aptitude. It is often combined with Skills when theorizing, remembering information or finding solutions to intricate problems with multiple angles to consider.

BRAWN

Brute force and toughness. Brawn represents raw physical power and endurance. How much you can dead lift, carry and how much physical punishment you can withstand is determined by Brawn.

CLOUT

Charisma, appeal and social influence. Clout measures a person's natural social graces, good looks or charm. Exactly how it manifests differs between individuals, but a high score in Clout means that you can get away with lies, win debates and that you have a flair for negotiations.

COOL

Cool measures willpower, focus and psychological resilience. Space is a dangerous place, and if you want to stay alive you'd better keep your head. In order to do that, you need Cool.

GUT FEELING

This is pure instinct, the capability to do guesswork and follow the good hunches. Gut Feeling is almost like a sixth sense; it might be those little hairs that stand up on the back of your neck when something is wrong or that warm tingle you get in your spine when something feels just right.

QUICKNESS

Agility, dexterity and nimbleness can be very useful. This Aptitude makes a person quick on his feet and gives him a natural grace. Whenever you need to move fast, quietly or engage in athletic activities such as climbing, Quickness comes in handy.

REACTION

The capability to react to things reflexively and then actually act on them can keep you alive. This is what Reaction entails. Whenever there's a question about wits or a quick response to external circumstances, Reaction comes into play.

FATE & FATE ROLLS

Fate is the force that allows characters to accomplish the impossible and survive the most severe situations. Every character starts out with three points in the so-called fate pool. These points can be used to change the outcomes of dice rolls and reduce damage done to the character.

Whenever a dice roll that was pivotal to the story or to the survival of the character fails, the player may spend a point from his fate pool. There are basically two ways to use this: To get the bare minimum success in order to be successful in a failed important roll and to avoid death and critical damage.

When reducing damage it works like this: A critical wound can be reduced to a regular serious wound and something that would otherwise kill the character is reduced to a non fatal critical wound that causes some kind of permanent injury or scarring. This system is mostly played by the storytellers ear and fiat so it can be used to save others and pull off whatever daring acts that is dramatically appropriate. In a game where there are one hit kills and where missed rolls can drive your character irrevocably insane this system can come in handy. The points has to be spent directly after the incident the player wishes to change has occurred.

***Example:** Silak has a large axe swung into him by a huge, spiked and partially flayed monster of a man. It hits and due to the weapon and supernatural strength of the creature it causes 10 points worth of fatal damage. Silak only has 14 hit points to begin with but he has already lost 8 in an earlier confrontation and is badly injured. So a direct hit like this will kill him at this point. The player decides to spend a fate point. He asks if he can avoid dying and manage to roll down the river in order to escape the situation temporarily. The storyteller tells him that he allows this. The storyteller then describes how Silak manages to get out of the way, at least partially, and is slashed deep in the chest, feeling several ribs crack and falls back in the river. He has suffered an additional 5 points of damage and is nearly dead. He will suffer some sort of permanent scarring or injury, but he is alive. And out of harm's way... at least for now.*

***Example:** Victor is being stabbed by a possessed realtor and he is on the ground. He has also dropped his gun which has slid across the floor. He will die shortly if someone doesn't step in as he is grievously wounded. But he doesn't have any fate points left. Just some meters away, Huxley is pinned against the wall by a cultist, struggling for a gun. But realizing that the character of Victor will die if he is not saved, the player of Huxley asks if she can spend one fate point to direct the gun at the ceiling in the old decrepit house. She wants to shoot down a beam, loose piece of masonry or whatever that can crash down on the possessed, allowing Victor a narrow escape. Feeling that it is appropriate and that it would create a cool scene the storyteller agrees. While she struggles, Huxley manages to point the barrel of the gun towards a heavy iron chain on the wall that holds a heavy chandelier in place. She forces down the*

trigger and the bullet miraculously hits the mark. The chain rips and sends the chandelier falling down. The sound draws the attention of the possessed who lets go of Victor as he looks up, screaming as he sees the thing come crashing down. This allows Victor to break free and crawl for his gun. The possessed man dives out of the way. But he soon gets up and starts running towards Victor. Though still on the floor bleeding, Victor is now firing away at the man with his heavy magnum revolver...

STEP 6: SECONDARY APTITUDES

Secondary Aptitudes are mostly derived from the primary ones.

DEFENSE

This trait helps your character stay out of the way of close combat attacks and thrown projectiles. Defense is derived by adding the character's Reaction to his Quickness and comparing the result to the table below. See the section on combat for more information on defense.

QUICKNESS + REACTION	DEFENSE
1-2	1
3-5	2
6-8	3
9	4
10	5

CARRYING CAPACITY

With adequate and non-encumbering bags, straps and holsters to carry equipment, a character can carry around five times his Brawn in kilograms without being encumbered. Every kilo of weight beyond this will reduce his movement by 3 and every five kilos beyond that limit will inflict a -1 penalty to Quickness and Athletics.

Carrying equipment in an encumbering fashion (several weapons slung over the shoulder, dangling items tied to the belt, etc.) can cause these negative effects even if the character's carrying capacity hasn't been exceeded. The storyteller has to judge these situations on a case by case basis.

HIT POINTS

A character has his Brawn +12 Fatal and Bashing hit points. See the Health Chapter for more information.

MENTALITY

When the human mind is confronted with the terrors of the grotesque and bizarre it can snap like a branch under too much weight. When this happens it leaves a scar and reduces the psychological well-being of the victimized

person. This diminishes the overall composure and mood, which leads to depression and susceptibility to mental illness.

Mentality consists of ten levels. Each level holds an amount of psyche points (PSY). Whenever the mind snaps these points are reduced by a certain amount depending on the situation. When one level suffers a complete depletion of psyche points the character drops down one level. A character has a number of psyche points per level equal to his total rank in Cool x 2. The levels are as follows.

Peaceful

Composed

Uptight

Anxious

Worried

Stressed

Strained

Disturbed

Anguished

Tormented



ESSENCE (ESS)

In Noctum, unearthly powers exist in different forms. When humans perform archaic rituals or use psychic abilities they draw the power from within themselves. This power is called essence. Everyone has a small amount of essence but some have much more. To calculate how much essence a character has to roll 1D. Multiply the result by 10 and you will get the total essence. Players that know they want to play gifted characters should get to do so without worrying about one single roll. The storyteller should allow them to get a minimum of 50 essence points, no matter what the dice shows. It is no fun playing one of these characters if you cannot use the abilities that come with it.

MOVEMENT

Movement is, as Defense, determined by your Quickness + Reaction. This bonus is added to chase rolls and such (see Actions that needs detailing). See table below.

QUICKNESS + REACTION	MOVEMENT
1-2	-
3-5	+1
6-8	+2
9	+3
10	+4

STEP 7: SKILLS & TRAININGS

Skills are abilities that have been sharpened by experience, training or some form of schooling. They aren't natural as such, but have been learned throughout life. Each stereotype comes with a set of recommended Skills. These are only suggestions that lend a guiding hand in the process of determining what kind of Skills a certain type of individual may possess.

Skills marked with an asterisk (*) cannot be used until at least 1 skill point has been spent on it. It is for example impossible to create a computer program if you don't have any experience; it doesn't matter how smart you are. An important part when buying Skills is to not try to make a "catch-all" kind of character. Find a couple of useful Skills that suit your character's occupation and personality and go for it. The players will work as a team and in many ways complement each other. Be sure to have motivation for all your characters skills. Skills have been picked up somewhere in life. To some extent, Skills are a telltale of what kind of life a person might have lived. You get 22 points to spend on Skills and they are bought for a 1 for 1 basis up to rank three. To buy from rank three to four costs 2 points and from four to five costs 2 as well.

Trainings are based on certain Skills and gives the character access to a specialized field within a Skill or set of Skills. *Profiling*, *Handwriting Analysis* and *Sniping* are examples of Trainings. Go through the Trainings as you buy your Skills as every Training has prerequisite based on ranks in one or more Skills. All beginning characters start out with *two Trainings*.

Skill Buy Points: 22

Number of Trainings From the Start: 2

STEP 8: EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

To determine the monetary resources a character has at his disposal, Noctum uses a financial scale. It ranges from one to ten. Each stereotype comes with a recommendation regarding finances. They will also be allowed to start with fitting equipment. What goes is up to the storyteller. Alternately they can purchase gear for their savings. Currency is measured in US dollars. Salary is measured in income per month. Rent and cost of living aren't factored in and have to be decided by the storyteller.

1: Derelict hobo

Salary: -

Saved cash: 100\$

Credit: -

Residence: Cardboard box

2: Welfare case

Salary: 800 \$

Saved cash: -

Credit: -

Residence: Shitty one room apartment with shared kitchen and facilities.

3: Day worker

Salary: 1200 \$

Saved cash: -

Credit: -

Residence: Shitty one room apartment but you got your own cooking space and bathroom.

4: Minimum wage

Salary: 2000 \$

Saved cash: 500\$

Credit: 3000\$

Residence: An acceptable one-room apartment.

5: Average income

Salary: 3000\$

Saved cash: 6000\$

Credit: 10 000\$

Residence: An okay two-room apartment.

6: Good earner

Salary: 8000 \$

Saved cash: 60,000\$

Credit: 100,000\$

Residence: A small house in suburbia or a nice two-room apartment and a very small summer or winter cottage.

7: Very good earner

Salary: 12000\$

Saved cash: 100,000\$

Credit: 200,000\$

Residence: A nice house or a nice three-room apartment and a nice summer or winter cabin

8: Extremely fortunate

Salary: 30,000\$

Saved cash: 500,000\$

Credit: 1,000,000\$

Residence: A very big house or a five-room apartment and two summer/winter dwellings.

9: Rich

Salary: 100,000\$

Saved cash: 5,000,000\$

Credit: 10,000,000\$

Residence: A small mansion or a nice eight-room apartment and five other smaller cottages or apartments spread throughout the country or the world.

10: Wealthy

Salary: 300,000\$

Saved cash: 10,000,000\$

Credit: 20,000,000 \$

Residence: A large estate or a large penthouse floor and ten other smaller houses or apartments spread throughout the country or the world.

STEP 9: DETAILING

Now your character is basically done. Fill in the gaps and decide age (if you haven't done so), physical appearance, hobbies, smoker or non-smoker, the small quirks and kinks that give him that extra breadth of personality.

Try to work out where he stands politically, what movies does he watch, what is his favorite kind of food, hairstyle and dress? All these things help to visualize the character and make him come alive. Another important part is his family life such as siblings, children or significant other. Don't forget to fill in the modified stats on your character's Fight or Flight monitor.

FYI

There is another reason (other than the one stated in the foreword) behind the concept of having only weaknesses and no merits. The players will portray the characters and will inevitably find strengths of their own in these. Whether the characters are good, bad, or in-between, they are sure to have some traits that can be considered as strengths. But these are most likely to be revealed during play as the characters and the group dynamic are developed. It is all about where the players take their characters.

As mentioned in the introduction part "Many Shades of Gray", players can choose to play characters that are quite nasty. But even so, never let it go overboard either way. It would be ridiculous to have a character that goes around being bad just for the hell of it, and likewise it would be quite unrealistic to have a character that couldn't conceive doing anything wrong whatever the circumstances. If you play an enforcer (however bad he might be) he still has a reason for being this way. No one does anything without

a reason. This concept isn't about having characters of a "balanced" personality, rather it is about giving characters an underlying motive and reason that make them act the way they do.

The stereotypes are quite immersed in the world of Noctum, but if you want, you could easily have characters that are more "average Joes" without a hint of much misery in the beginning of the game. In the end, the storyteller and the players have to agree on what types of character they wish to use.

And no, there is no cost involved when it comes to magic and psychic abilities, but this doesn't mean that every character should have access to them. Storytellers and players are thought to be responsible enough to estimate what makes a "viable" and fun character without having a cost forced upon them. However, if you for some reason need a rule you may elect that a player have to sacrifice one attribute point and five skill points to be able to have the gift. This can be seen as a safety net if you ever run across a daft player: "My guy is a world class hitman and I would very much like to be able to set people on fire or read thoughts. That would help my character an awful lot in his line of work!"

CHAPTER 3

STEREOTYPES

From the journal of Olivia Lake

Silak and I went to Haven's Rest, a small town in New England. He rented a hunting lodge and told me to sit tight and wait. Then he had simply left. He left me there for eight hours, until way past sundown. I had only my camera and a spring assisted knife. The town was ten minutes away by car and there was no cell phone reception. I didn't feel safe at all.

At last I heard the car pull up, and took a quick look out the window to make sure that it was Silak. Seeing him exit the car I sat back down, relaxing. The momentary calm shattered as the door burst open with a loud bang, which made me bolt up out of the sofa.

Silak came in with a wild look in his eyes, dragging a naked, screaming woman after him by the hair. I couldn't believe what I saw. Had he completely lost his mind?

Panicking, I yelled at him to let her go.

In response, he roared at me to shut the fuck up and help him tie the damn "thing" down, indicating the woman. As he dragged her, kicking and screaming, past me, I saw that she had a large dagger sticking out of her chest.

My mind reeled, I kept asking him what the fuck was going on, but he just insisted that I help him tie the thing down. For a while I actually considered stabbing him and freeing the woman. Silak was unhinged, to say the least. As I continued with my ranting questions he drew his gun and shot the woman twice in the stomach. I flinched and staggered, almost fell. To my amazement, the woman just began to scream at us in a language I'd never heard.

Silak stared at me and I almost thought he was going to shoot me, but instead he told me that a human would have died from those shots. This thing that appeared to be a woman wasn't human at all, and the dagger sticking out of it was the only thing keeping it at bay.

Finally I did as he asked and got a rope, realizing that he knew what he was doing. So those things could pass for human? Caleb had gone to MIT, Victor at the police academy and Huxley ... well, she had probably got most of her education in Bedford Hills Detention Center back in New York. But Silak ... I couldn't even imagine where he had learned all the crazy shit he obviously knew. As I got control of myself, I did what I always do when something important or strange is unfolding in front of me. I took out my camera ...

Stereotypes are moulds for characters. They are presented with a set of recommended Skills, Trainings a short back-story and recommended weaknesses. Some have a Required Training as the actual stereotype is built around this knowledge. Remember, that the recommended Skills might not include the Skills needed to acquire the recommending Training. If none of these fits your ideas for a character feel free to make your own stereotype, in order to create a character you will enjoy playing.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

You were booted out of the force when you tried to nail the son of a local influential businessman for murder. The fucker stabbed a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl and you didn't even want to think about the things he did to her as she laid there, bleeding out. At the time you didn't know that your boss received a large chunk of cash from that particular businessman. You were told to back off but you knew the asshole was guilty and you couldn't let it go.

Soon after that IAB found some discrepancies in your bank account. It seemed as if you had been taking money from unsavory characters. Of course it was a frame-up. The killer walked and you were discharged. Everyone believed you were on the take.

It was a mess from there on out. Your old drinking habits took over your life, your wife filed for divorce and left with the kids. Soon after you got evicted from your apartment when you couldn't pay the bills.

Years went by as you drank your life away. But all that changed when you ran into someone you recognized. The killer smiled at you from his Porsche and laughed. From that day on you swore to nail him once and for all. You got your life back together and opened a private investigation bureau to make ends meet. Now you obsess about the case, thinking of little else.

SKILLS

Contacts
Fast Talk
Interrogation
Investigation
Photo & Film
Red Tape
Search
Security
Stealth
Streetwise

TRAININGS

Electronic Surveillance
Forgery
Safe Cracking
Slight of Hand

WEAKNESSES

Drunk
Fanatic
Misanthropic
Vengeance

Quote: "It's just a matter of time until I get him. I have all the notes and statements I need. If only I could shatter his alibi, connect the dots and find a witness that isn't scared shitless."

Finances: 5



THE OBSESSED

Ever since childhood you have known there was more to the world than met the eye. After that insidious dream of an unholy dark presence, followed by your sister's disappearance when you were thirteen, you knew that something lurked in the shadows. Since that day you have felt watched and started to study the occult and various myths in hopes of finding answers. After your eighteenth birthday your best friend was found severely mauled and you knew this was a warning: Back off or you're next!

It was your responsibility not to endanger those you loved, and so you moved from home. You went to college studying mythology, occult and the paranormal. Five years went by and during that time three "accidents" occurred; they were identical to that of your best friend. All were people you knew. They were mauled but left alive. Sadly, they remembered nothing. You always sensed the dark presence around you and after college you started your quest.

You soon discovered that cults, sects and all kinds of dangerous and crazed people committed crimes and performed bizarre rituals unnoticed. You took it upon yourself to hunt them down in order to find answers. Why has this presence been in your life as far as you can remember, and what happened to your sister? People in your surroundings often get hurt in the most bizarre ways and you always keep moving, seldom getting close to anyone.

Finances: 4

SKILLS

Academics
Contacts
Cryptography
Deprogramming
Focus
Occult
Parapsychology
Search
Shooting

TRAININGS

Forgery
Handwriting Analysis
Linguistics
Meditation
Theology

WEAKNESSES

Fanatic
Dark Presence
Defector
Night Terrors
Phobias

Quote: *"I don't care what you believe. I know what's out there and you don't. Why the hell should I tell you? You would just think I'm crazy. However, if you were to believe I'm telling the truth you wouldn't get another night's sleep."*



GOVERNMENTAL AGENT

When you were headhunted from the FBI by Branch 94 you felt honored and a little surprised. Only in passing had you heard rumors about the agency, and never really understood what kind of cases they handled. Now, after two years working for them, you still don't understand.

They send you off to investigate everything from disappearances to the thefts of archaeological items. You have seen some strange and terrible things you cannot fully reconcile, and each new assignment gets even worse. A couple of months ago you asked your supervisor what was going on. He smiled, casually asking how your wife and son were doing. The message was clear.

You want to quit but don't know if it would benefit your health. You remember agent Stevens who was scared shitless after an assignment. He wanted to quit. You never saw him again, and your supervisor told you that Stevens had taken an "extended vacation". You could easily read between the lines.

The worst part is that you are unable to talk to anyone since you, like the rest of the agents, signed a contract. Everything pertaining to your work is classified and compartmentalized. You can only talk to the office shrink and you are quite sure that everything you say is reported directly to the supervisor.

Of late you have begun to plan an unofficial investigation of your own into the Branch itself. You need to know what is going on but you are also scared out of your mind. You don't know whom to trust. At first you couldn't wait to get in, now you desperately try to claw your way out.

Finances: 6

SKILLS

Athletics
Contacts
Close Combat
Computer
Contacts
Forensics
Interrogation
Investigation
Psychology
Search
Security
Stealth

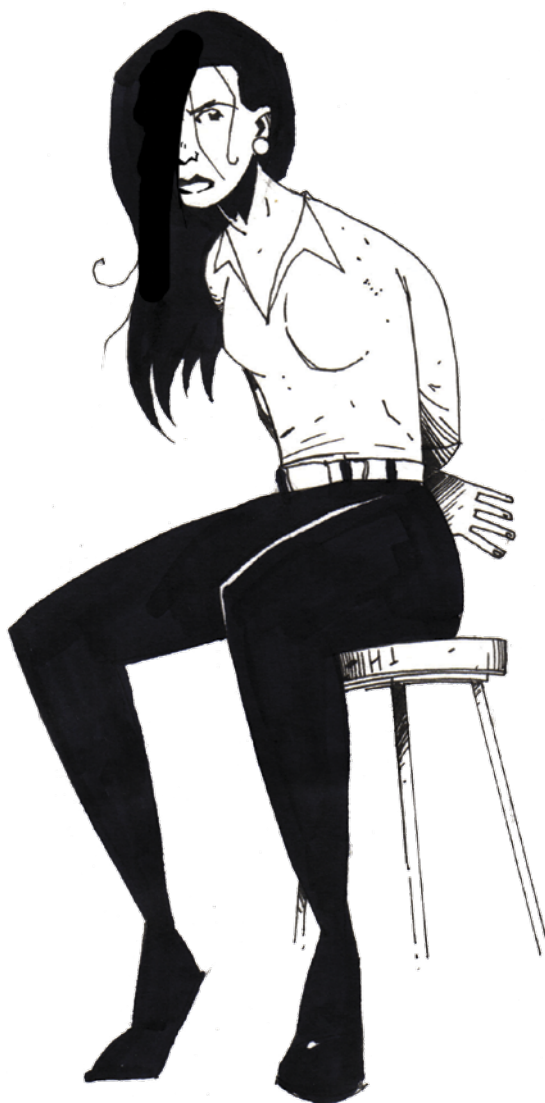
TRAINING

Auto Fire
Electronic Surveillance
Hacking
Martial Arts
Profiling
Tradecraft

WEAKNESSES

Flashbacks
OCD
Paranoia
Unknowing Witness

Quote: "Sorry sir, I'm not at liberty to say. I can't help you, sir. What? Sorry, I'm not at liberty to say. I saw that! You're with them, aren't you! Don't lie to me, Kinsley sent you, didn't he?"



THE EXPERIMENT

It is all a haze. You only remember the last five years of your life and those years have been spent running. You woke up in a dark street wearing what looked like a hospital gown. You soon discovered that your memory was missing, and that unknown parties were after you. Another discovery freaked you out at first and that was the fact that you could read minds.

Someone has used you as a lab rat and somehow you managed to escape. You spend your days and night on the run trying to piece together your lost past. You lead a life on the streets using a fake name. Everything is about connecting the dots and to stay on the move. Whoever, and whatever, you are, those who made you this way sure don't want you running loose.

In your investigations things of unimaginable horror have moved past in the corner of your eye. Sometimes you think about giving up and let the men in the dark suits take you. But when flashbacks of gleaming surgery instruments, tubes and horrific pain scramble your mind you keep on running.

(Work together with the storyteller to come up with an appropriate psychic ability.)

Finances: 1

SKILLS

Academics
Athletics
Computers
Fast Talk
First Aid
Focus
Parapsychology
Red Tape
Science
Search
Stealth
Streetwise
Survival

TRAININGS

Forgery
Hacking
Linguistics
Meditation
Parkour
Psychic Abilities (Required)
Slight of Hand

WEAKNESSES

Amnesia
Drug Addict
Flashbacks
Paranoid
Hunted

Quote: "My name is...Ellen...eh...Ellen Parks. Where I grew up? Eh...Virginia, Enough about me, Edward, let's talk about you. No, I'm sure you told me your name. Shit! You see those guys in suits by the door? They aren't with you, are they?"



CITY SHARK

Poverty, abuse, and violence were all you knew growing up in the slums. You never knew your real father, only the hundreds of “uncles” your filthy whore of a mother paraded into the bedroom. You still remember sitting by the TV at the age of nine watching Transformers, hearing the sound of grunts and squeaking bedsprings.

In your early teens you realized that the only kids that had cash and respect were those who ran errands for Mr. Donnelly. Soon you did the same. You pulled off your first heist at the age of fifteen, and ghosted a guy at the age of eighteen. You worked your way up the food chain and by the age of twenty-one you had managed to become a feared enforcer. Money and respect were at your command and with that, so was the cocaine. Life was grand.

However, during a dispute over territory the Donnelly crew was wiped out. You couldn't care less about the fuckers but you didn't like being out of a job. You started freelancing, working for the highest bidder as a courier, hitman and enforcer. You were caught during a robbery. Luckily you only drove the getaway car and were merely sent away for six years.

You never gave up who hired you for the job or any of your running mates. On the inside you shivved a couple of squealers, which earned you even more respect. Since you got out there hasn't been a shortage of job offers.

But things are getting weird on the streets. You hear of strange disappearances, stories about wiseguys turning up in dark alleys torn to shreds, even though they were armed. You don't really know what to believe but you watch your ass closely, that is the only way to stay alive anyway.

Finances: 6

SKILLS

Close Combat
Contacts
Fast Talk
First Aid
Repairs
Search
Shooting
Security
Stealth
Streetwise
Survival
Vehicle

TRAININGS

Auto Fire
Cut & Sling
Explosives
Martial Arts
Safe Cracking
Slight of Hand

WEAKNESS

Irritable
Homicidal
Sadist
Drug Addict
Hunted
Greedy

Quote: “Look what you did, you fucking pig! You got blood all over my favorite jacket! At first I was gonna shoot you but now you'll get the blade. No, fuck that! Marco, bring me the tire iron goddamnit!”



PARANORMAL INVESTIGATOR

Since you were little there had always been a need to explore the unknown burning in your heart. In your search for excitement you sneaked into abandon buildings and places which according to urban legends were haunted. One of those nights something happened; you only remember entering the house and then movements in the darkness. After that you only remember running home screaming.

This incident became a calling. You now study the paranormal from a scientific point of view. You believe that ghosts, demons and other supernatural occurrences are residual energies left by humans and certain strong events. The occult is just for those who don't have the stamina for real research.

But still, it has been hard to come up with concrete evidence and you have seen things that go against your own beliefs. Since none of these occurrences has been recordable through your equipment you blame it on too many hours of work and tricks of the mind. However, a lingering fear has started to creep up on you. It seems that more and more occurrences of unexplained phenomena are being reported each year.

Finances: 5

SKILLS

Academics
Contacts
Computer
Cryptography
Occult
Parapsychology
Photo & Film
Psychology
Rhetoric
Science
Search

TRAININGS

Fortune Telling
Linguistics
Theology

WEAKNESSES

Crossover
Drunk
Fanatic
Flashbacks
OCD
Phobias

Quote: *"I don't care what we saw, it wasn't recorded, hence just an optical illusion created in our minds. So what if both of us experienced the same thing? Ever heard of a little thing called mass hysteria?"*

PROFILER

You had a play date with a friend that lived across the street. At first you knocked a couple of times on the door, but as no one answered, you went inside. You still remember how quiet the house was as you entered.

You found your friend, his little sister and their parents sitting at the dinner table. The table was set real nice and everything was perfect. But they were all dead. You could see rope burns on their necks, and their eyes were milky, void of life. At the time you were only nine, and the shock made you sink down on the floor, paralyzed by fear.

Your mother found you six hours later. She had tried to call, but as no one answered she came to get you when it was time for bed.

Your friend and his family had fallen victim to a serial killer; this you learned from the news and what you could glean from the conversations the FBI agents had with your parents. It took several months of therapy to get you to function normally again; you didn't even utter a word. When you finally snapped out of your state of emotional blockage, the first word you uttered was "Why".

Since that day you have always wondered what drives a serial killer or spree killer. Why do they do what they do and how can one find them and stop them in time? You studied hard during high school, keeping much to yourself. You watched others in order to understand them. At college you studied psychology, criminology and forensic medicine. Your goal was set; you were going straight to the Behavioral Analysis Unit.

You passed with merit and have been working full time with profiling and capturing serial killers since then. Catching them is but a small part, you want to understand them. In some respects you hate the very notion of serial killers but some parts of you hold a morbid fascination. In a sense, they are one step higher in the evolutionary chain, at least when it comes to dominance. Humans hunt and kill everything beneath them in nature, but these killers hunt other humans; they are roaming predators that prey on the population itself.

But something has begun to bother you. Patterns are beginning to emerge, and you cannot help but to think there actually is some kind of evil, a dark thread of sorts, that holds it all together. Maybe you are cracking up from years of trying to understand these predators. As of yet, you haven't told anyone about your somewhat esoteric and grim theory. The things you have seen and the dreadfulness you experienced in your childhood have indeed scarred you, and you find it hard not to see the latent killer in everyone around you. Sometimes you even question your own goodness and sanity.

You see how the evil spreads like a disease, almost as if it has a mind of its own. Is there really a pattern, and in that case, why? It is hard to see the light in the end of the tunnel when you are spending your days and nights in a cesspool of human depravity, and the misery it brings.

Finances: 5

SKILLS

Academics
Contacts
Deprogramming
Focus
Forensics
Interrogation
Investigation
Psychology
Rhetoric
Search

TRAININGS

Handwriting Analysis
Linguistics
Meditation
Pathology
Profiling (Required)

WEAKNESSES

Drug Addict
Flashbacks
Misanthropic
Night Terrors
Paranoia
Terrible Relative

Quote: "Well, this isn't the first time he has killed. However, it's the first time he actually found himself and lived out parts of his fantasy. The victim's face is covered, it might be a part of the ritual but most likely he felt ashamed of what he had done, conflicted. He won't for long though. He will savor the kill but it won't last him. You will find another victim within two months, and at that time he won't be conflicted anymore. Next time he will probably look her in the eyes and leave her uncovered. He has learned that he's in control, and that will excite him even more."



DISILLUSIONED PRIEST

Even growing up you knew that you wanted to become a priest. All the prayer, gospels and teachings filled you with a golden glow. The knowledge that God was up there in heaven with Jesus Christ the Savior made you at peace.

After years of hard study at the seminar you became a priest and got a small parish of your own. When you preached and saw that you had the power to instill that same glow in others, you felt privileged and grateful. But things soon changed.

After two years a young boy in your parish was murdered after being sexually brutalized. You comforted your parishioners and oversaw the funeral. A couple of weeks later the police arrested a man for the deed. It was your former theological teacher, a priest. Your world started to crumble. You did your own investigation into crimes committed by men working for the church, and the numbers were staggering. Most of the cases never saw the light of day since the church covered things up, or settled abuse cases out of court to protect its reputation.

Suddenly you noticed the ugliness all around you, and when a family of three, that were members of your parish, were killed in a robbery gone wrong you snapped. You knew of a man, another priest that had abused a girl but settled out of court. You bought a gun, reported it stolen a couple of months later, and then went to the guilty priest.

He lived alone and when he opened the door you shot him in the face. At that moment you felt closer to God than ever, you were his avenging angel. Now this is your calling. You hunt down the wicked ones, especially men of the church, and let them feel the wrath of God. Of late you have started to see things in the shadows in the dead of night, and you know this is the doing of Satan himself in his attempts to thwart your godly works.

Finances: 4

SKILLS

Academics
Contacts
Deprogramming
Focus
Interrogation
Psychology
Red Tape
Rhetoric
Search
Shooting
Stealth
Streetwise

TRAININGS

Linguistics
Meditation
Theology (Required)

WEAKNESSES

Fanatic
Nigh Terrors
OCD
Sinner
Vengeance

Quote: *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whitened sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness!"*



BOOK DETECTIVE

Knowledge is power and this you knew the same moment you learned how to read. Older works, and how they passed on knowledge from generation to generation, especially enchanted you. When you went to college your major was a given: History of Literature. You minored in linguistics to help further your understandings.

Later on in life you also learned that knowledge wasn't just power but an income. There were all kinds of obscure collectors that would pay a great deal in order to get their hands on old first editions. You also made money authenticating books and brokering deals. Soon your interest in knowledge was overturned by your greed and mercenary nature.

You are unscrupulous in your dealings, doing anything to make a buck. You con those who have no insight into selling valuable texts to you for half the prize, or less. But it is a way of life and you have to make a living. Sometimes you run into weird collectors who want to get their hands on the strangest, and most peculiar, of works dealing with the occult. On these runs you have felt watched and uneasy. But what can you do, this is your life and you have to live it.

Finances: 7

SKILLS

Academics
Contacts
Cryptography
Fast Talk
Occult
Psychology
Red Tape
Rhetoric
Search

TRAININGS

Forgery
Handwriting Analysis
Linguistics (Required)
Theology

WEAKNESSES

Greedy
Defector
Drunk
Misanthropic
Paranoia

Quote: "No, no. Trust me; this book isn't worth more than three grand. I want to add it to my personal collection so I'm willing to give you six grand for it. What do you say? Great! That's a deal then." (Flicking up the cell phone after leaving the room).

"Hi, it's me. I got the book you wanted. I'll sell it to you for fifteen thousand. You know it's a bargain."



DEMORALIZED SOLDIER

You felt that joining the army was the right thing to do. What better way to prove your worth than to serve your country? As soon as you got of age you signed up. You loved the training and the solidarity, and once you were done they shipped you off to the war. At first it was a rewarding experience, doing the right thing, but a couple of months in you saw your first firefight. The blood of your friends spilled and you killed for the first time that night.

Since then you have seen countless battles and friends that have died. You have killed more enemies than you would like to know. Many times orders from higher up the chain involved leaving men to their fate. Other times missions that had nearly no chance of success were forced upon you. It seems it is easy to command a squad to walk through fire, death and blood when you aren't in the shit yourself.

As the years went by you started to lose your respect for those who gave you orders, and what the hell were you fighting for anyway these days? It was all politics and greed paid for with the lives of good men and women.

You gave it up and went back to civilian life. In the war you handled equipment worth millions of dollars, back in the real world you cannot even hold down a job flipping burgers. Nightmares and flashbacks from the war follow you wherever you go, and you have a hard time adjusting to life. You travel from place to place living as a vagrant, not really wanting to stay anywhere. Sometimes you get confused and forget where you are; reminiscences from the war haunt your memories. At those times you are volatile, ready to go off in a seconds notice at the blink of an eye.

Finances: 3

SKILLS

Athletics
Close Combat
Contacts
First Aid
Focus
Repairs
Search
Security
Shooting
Stealth
Survival
Vehicle

TRAININGS

Auto Fire
Boating
Booby-Traps
Explosives
Heavy Weapons
Martial Arts
Piloting
Scuba Diving
Sniping

WEAKNESSES

Drug Addict
Drunk
Flashbacks
Homicidal
Irritable
Nightmares

Quote: "Why don't you shut your fucking mouth, kid? You gotta be crazy if you want to sign up! There's no glory in war, only pain, blood and casualties. It's easy to make that kind of decision when you're sitting here all snug and comfy in the local bar. Trust me kid, when you're trying to keep your best friend's entrails from falling out like some goddamn candy from a piñata while taking heavy fire, it doesn't seem all that glorious anymore."



RELUCTANT RITUALIST

Life was good, even normal, until you went to study mythology at the university. When you first found the book on a school trip to France you just thought it was an amazing literary discovery. The man in the small tucked-away bookstore had to be a fool to sell an old Greek text from the twelfth century for a couple of hundred bucks. You and your friends started translating it.

Your work continued when you got back and soon you discovered that the manuscript contained arcane knowledge of rituals. Just for fun you decided to try it out. Surrounded by darkness, in the middle of a forest glen, you conducted a ritual meant to bring good fortune. You laughed afterwards, shrugging it off as a ridiculous thing to do. Imagine your surprise when, a week later, one of your friends won the lottery, the other got an internship he always dreamed about and you got a huge scholarship.

For a while you didn't dare to talk about it but a couple of months later you decided to try again. Once again you got what you asked for. This continued for several years and foolishly enough you hadn't even translated the whole thing, just the rituals you thought would bring you prosperity. This neglect led to a terrible outcome. One night a new ritual was conducted, one you never tried before. You remember the chanting and then all you remember is fear, blood and screams.

When you came to, both your friends were dead, mutilated and bearing bizarre markings on their bodies. You ran and told no one. Media, police and the whole town were in a

state of shock when the bodies were discovered. Everyone thought it was the work of a brutal serial killer, but you knew. You burned the book and never wanted to dabble in the occult again; fate had another plan for you.

Some years later, after you moved to another town across the country, you saw news footage of a local crime scene. When you saw the markings on the bodies you understood. It was unmistakable; they were the same as those of years ago. You had let something out, something evil, and when the murders escalated there was no choice. Reluctantly you took it upon yourself to banish this evil from the world, and doing so meant reaching out to the unknown again. Nowadays you practice rituals in order to gain understanding of what happened, but you do so with care and respect. Sure, you use it to gain some benefits once in a while but these days you know what you are doing. Or at least you try to convince yourself of that.

(You know all basic arcane rituals, and may choose three greater arcane rituals and a magical system)

Finances: 5

SKILLS

Academics
Contacts
Cryptography
Focus
Occult
Parapsychology
Rhetoric
Search

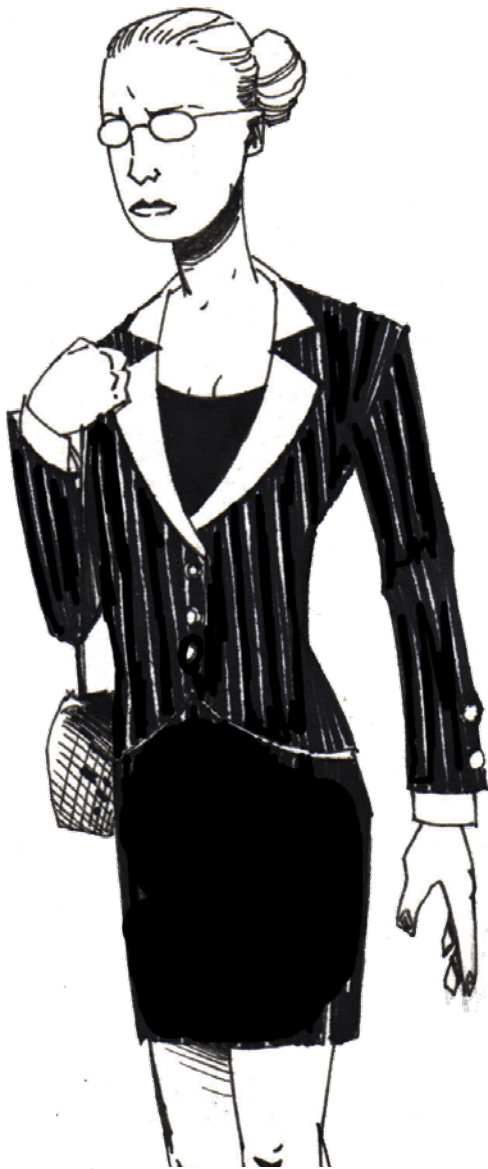
TRAINING

Fortunetelling
Linguistics
Meditation
Rituals (Required)
Theology

WEAKNESSES

Gatekeeper
Crossover
Dark Presence
Defector
Marked
Night Terrors
Ominous Prophecy

Quote: "Never fail to recognize the powerful and unruly nature of the metaphysical realm. What you see before you is just the physical shell of creation. Tread lightly and be wary. Under no circumstances should one practice the occult with an indifferent mind."



CAT BURGLAR

Average upbringing, average grades and an average life; everything was average. One day all that changed when your parents died in a car accident and your uncle Ross took you in. You always liked Ross, he seemed free and always on the move. Traveling from New York to LA, from LA to Paris and all over the world. He worked as a security consultant dealing with alarm systems.

After about a year when you got your act together he started to teach you all kinds of weird and dangerous sports: BASE-jumping, parkour, buidlering, paintball, walling, spelunking and many others. He also got you a part-time job at a local locksmith company. Whenever he had the time he instructed you in different alarm systems; telling you he wanted you to take over his business one day; and so you did. But the business was something entirely different than selling and installing security systems.

Ross told you he was a professional thief, a cat burglar, and he had been preparing you all this time. After two more years of training he took you with him on your first job, which involved getting inside a bank and stealing a couple of documents for a client. It went like a charm, and since then you have been hooked.

You are a professional cat burglar that only takes contract jobs. Through stealth and bypassing you make your entries. You seldom carry a gun and have never used one as of yet in your work. Guns are tools used by clumsy oafs. Lately your jobs have become strange. A client of yours asks for more and more weird artifacts and documents tucked away in remote locations. Whenever you handle these things a shiver runs down your spine. Something is off but you cannot put your finger on it.

Finances: 7

SKILLS

Athletics
Computers
Contacts
Fast Talk
Photo & Film
Red Tape
Repairs
Search
Security
Stealth

TRAININGS

Electronic Surveillance
Explosives
Forgery
Hacking
Parkour
Safe Cracking
Slight of Hand

WEAKNESSES

Bigot
Greedy
Hunted
Vengeance

Quote: "Yeah, I love Paris, I've been there many times. It's a nice city, a lot of culture and monuments. Of course I've visited the Louvre, just not during regular business hours."



SCORNFUL PSYCHIC

Summer camp was always something you enjoyed, at least until that last one when you were fifteen. No one saw it coming. How could they? Late that night, sleeping blissfully in your cabin, you woke to the sound of screams and gunfire. Scared out of your wits you hid under your bed. The door was kicked in and your roommates fell to the floor as a gun blazed. It didn't take long until your bed was overturned and a dirty-looking crazed man stood over you. His eyes were burning with sadism and perversity.

They never caught the spree killer that came calling that night. They found you in a bloody pile on the floor. The man tortured you for hours and forced you to... do things to the corpses of your friends at gunpoint. When he was done he shot you in the chest and left you for dead. You woke up in the hospital. You were the only survivor and had been in a coma for weeks. Even worse was the fact that you'd been clinically dead for six minutes. It was quite the miracle that you didn't suffer any brain damage due to the oxygen deprivation.

The trauma alone was terrible, and you still suffer from it, but the real shit hit the fan when you started to hear and actually see the dead. Not only that, you could touch a person, or object, and get an insight into what they had experienced.

One night a girl came to you, she was as dead as they come. She told you that the man that killed her worked in your school. With your newfound abilities you soon discovered who it was. You tried to tell the police and when they didn't believe it you showed them where the body was hidden. After that everything got out of hand. They suspected you, and thought that your trauma had made you snap. Of course they couldn't tie you to the body.

Worst of all; your parents thought you were crazy. When you insisted that your abilities were real they stuck you in a mental hospital. Four long years of drugs, sessions and ECT made you almost believe you *were* crazy. After the release, you moved far away from home. Still the dead speak to you, haunt you and with a touch of a person you gain insight. But if you reveal the truth someone will probably send you back to the institution. Your pain and suffering are a lonely burden and you hate the world for forcing it upon you.

(Chose either Psychometry, Precognition or Clairvoyance as a psychic ability)

Finances: 4

SKILLS

Contacts
Fast Talk
First Aid
Focus
Occult
Parapsychology
Psychology
Red Tape
Science
Search
Stealth
Streetwise
Vehicle

TRAININGS

Forgery
Fortune Telling
Linguistics
Meditation
Psychic Abilities (Required)

WEAKNESSES

Crossover
Drug Addict
Drunk
Irritable
Night Terrors
OCD
Phobias
Sexual Deviant

Quote: "No, don't help me up! Don't touch me! Don't..." (stares blankly) "You shouldn't have killed me, Michel, others will know. It's just a matter of time before they find my body..." (shakes head disoriented). "Did I just say something Michel? How the hell do I know your name? You look pale, man... Shit, not again..."



HORROR WRITER

Scary stories have always fascinated you. As a kid you told ghost stories to your friends that gave them nightmares for weeks. When you got older you started to write everything down. At college you majored in creative writing and minored in English. You took odd jobs here and there, but your passion was writing; you didn't feel whole without it.

Some of your short stories were published but it didn't pay the rent. Years went by and you honed your skills, publishing small works out of your own pocket. But one day a larger publishing house noticed you. After that your horror stories became renowned. These days the money you earn more than covers your now opulent lifestyle.

Inspiration is a strange thing and your work seems to become darker and grimmer. You visit small and isolated communities for weeks on end, isolating yourself in a cabin writing of the bizarre. The fans love it but these days you almost feel as if your inspiration is coming from elsewhere. Sometimes you see shapes moving outside the windows of the rented wooden cabin, but sleep deprivation and living on whiskey, coffee and cigarettes, not seeing the light of day for weeks, might do that to a person. Yet you feel as if your work is revealing something, and your mindset grows more distant. Sometimes you can swear that you have seen people that looked exactly like the characters in your books, and that murder, which was identical to the one

in your yet unpublished manuscript, was utterly bizarre. Often you travel to so-called haunted places where weird rumors circulate, to find inspirational environments that help you in your work.

Lately you have been receiving weird telephone calls and found strange letters telling you to watch your back and stop your investigations. At first you thought it was a crazed fan but after you changed your number the calls continued. You cannot but help to think about the shapes outside your window. A writer's imagination is both his curse and his gift, and you don't really know what to think. However, writing is your calling. You just hope your wife and kids put up with you when your writing mood kicks in. You become distant and a glare of obsession twinkles in your eyes.

Finances: 8

SKILLS

Academics
Contacts
Fast Talk
Investigation
Occult
Parapsychology
Psychology
Rhetoric
Search

TRAININGS

Linguistics
Theology
Handwriting Analysis
Profiling

WEAKNESSES

Drunk
Insane Heritage
Night Terrors
OCD
Pathological Liar
Unknowing Witness

Quote: "Now, where was I? Ah yes! "Lumbering shapes of an horrific era came shambling towards him. Allan froze in his steps, unable to reconcile what he saw. As the spawns from his nightmares came closer the pungent and vile smell of burnt flesh became apparent..." Yes, that will do. So, Allan, my favorite of characters, will there be a sequel? If not you have to die in the ending."



FRANTIC REPORTER

It was easy getting an internship, especially since you graduated in the top of your class with a degree in journalism. You worked your way up quickly, and soon you started on heavier stories, and became renowned after you cracked open a case of corruption in City Hall. You were on the fast track to success.

A couple of years later you investigated a case involving human trafficking. It was a dangerous and stupid thing to do, but you snuck into a warehouse where the Russian mob possibly could be holding their prisoners. Some good shots of that, and a catchy headline, would give you the Pulitzer. Nothing could have prepared you for what you found inside.

Around an altar of sorts stood shapes in cloaks. They chanted in an uncanny language over a young naked woman. Suddenly, before you could react, one of them plunged a knife into her quivering sweaty body. She screamed but didn't die. All took their turn gulping down her blood. You snapped off a couple of shots but it was too dark to get any exposure, and turning on the flash didn't seem like a good idea. You felt sick and started to sneak out when you tripped over a metal beam. They turned and ran after you. You didn't dare to look back but the sound of voices turned guttural and snarling, almost beastlike. You made it to your car and drove away.

You immediately reported it to the police but when they entered the building it was empty, and no trace evidence whatsoever was found. You couldn't let it go and started to research satanic cults, conspiracies and strange abductions. You fell into disrepute in your obsession and soon got fired for your unwillingness to write about anything else.

These days you work for a small magazine dealing with the unexplained and pseudo-science. It pays the bills and you got all the time in the world uncovering what you believe to be a real life conspiracy of dark mystery.

Finances: 5

SKILLS

Academics
Computers
Contacts
Fast Talk
Interrogation
Law
Photo & Film
Red Tape
Rhetoric
Search
Stealth
Streetwise

TRAININGS

Forgery
Hacking
Linguistics
Slight of Hand

WEAKNESSES

Drunk
Hunted
Misanthropic
OCD
Phobias
Unknowing Witness

Quote: *"Do you really think I give a shit what you think of me? I know what I've seen and it wasn't pretty. How the hell do you explain all those disappearances each year? That fad during the nineties when FBI investigated ritual abuse couldn't have been all smoke and mirrors."*

UNSCRUPULOUS SCIENTIST

Science is a wondrous thing and you love every aspect of it. Straight out of the university you got a job at a prestigious genetics division. For a while you were happy working there, but as time went by and you wanted to expand your knowledge, you found yourself in a rut. The division just wanted to work on surface phenomena.

When they found that you were conducting your own experiments concerning increased muscle capacity in rhesus monkeys they fired you, and filed a complaint to the medical board. Your license was suspended.

Shortly after, shady sponsors came out of the woodwork. You didn't know if they came from the government or some private institution, the important thing was their willingness to finance your research. They set you up with a lab and brought a sample of DNA the likes of which you had never seen. It had the most astonishing properties of regeneration, adaptability and duplication. Your sponsors asked you to find out if it was able to combine itself with human DNA. You jumped at the opportunity.

After several months of experimenting you did your first human trial. You didn't even ask where they got the unconscious man. Five hours after injecting the serum something happened. An uncontrolled mutation occurred, and the result was a horrid creature. You barely got a look at the thing as the wall exploded and armed men came storming in. You fled through the drainage system never looking back. After this you didn't hear anything from the sponsors.

Luckily they paid a great bit in advance, and with that money you were able to set up your own laboratory. You have no idea where to start but you are dead set on replicating the DNA you tampered with. It was amazing, if only you could obtain another sample. To further finance your research you take on small illegal jobs for various clients ranging from terrorist organizations to hidden branches of the government. Your work is too important to be interrupted.

Finances: 6

SKILLS

Academics
Computers
Contacts
Medicine
Psychology
Red Tape
Repairs
Rhetoric
Science

TRAININGS

Hacking
Linguistics
Pathology

WEAKNESSES

Drug Addict
Fanatic
Hunted
Night Terrors
OCD
Paranoia
Phobia

Quote: *"Just relax and breathe. It will sting a little bit and then you might start to feel a slight burning sensation. The side effect? Well, to be honest, you're my first subject."*

FYI

Well, sadly there isn't enough room to cover all kinds of stereotypes. However, that doesn't mean you cannot create your own. In light of this some ideas of additional stereotypes will be provided; hopefully you will get some inspiration.

Urban Explorer, Gangland Voodoo Priest, Sleazy Defense Attorney, The "Cleaner", Abusive Therapist, Amoral PR Agent, Suicidal Poet, Paranoid Fence, Conspiracy Theorist.

CHAPTER 4

WEAKNESSES

From the journal of Olivia Lake

Even though my brand of journalism, at least the "haunted location" part, isn't taken seriously in the professional world, my status as a freelance journalist has earned me a press ID. This opens some doors at times. That's why they sent me to follow this lead. The cover story of wanting to interview the staff at Shadow Gleam Mental Institution allowed me to see Gina Rodriguez. Her room was in the low-risk wing and I managed to get the foot in the door with some bull about an article involving mental hygiene laws. That damn . . . thing Silak had captured led me to this place.

As the orderly walked me down the corridor I began to feel dizzy, fighting a bout of hyperventilation. It was this damn hospital environment. I don't know why but I've always hated hospitals. I don't even remember being hospitalized for anything as a kid. But then there is that year. The year I was gone, the year that is a blank slate in my mind. I disappeared without a trace at the age of twelve and was returned home when I was thirteen. No signs of sexual abuse or injuries and I don't remember a thing.

Then the hospital corridor was gone, as if the world had been torn away. In my fright I saw a woman, twenty-something, standing terrified in a dark room, walls melting, giving way to a twisted machine. I knew her, I knew this, but from where? And that presence, a figure of flesh merged with tubes, wires and metal, watching from the shadows. I trembled as adrenaline surged through my system.

"Hey, miss, are you okay?" the orderly asked me with a worried expression. The vision had been a flashback. I get those at times, something about this place must have jogged a memory. Had I been here before? Was all that had happened the last few weeks connected to that blank spot in my mind? After I assured him that I was fine, he led on for a while. We stopped in front of an open cell door and he told me that I had twenty minutes. He still looked worried when he left.

As I entered the cell I gasped. All over the walls were ominous drawings depicting a familiar creature: one of flesh, wires, tubes and metal. Gina Rodriguez looked up from her current drawing. She stared at me wide-eyed. She knew me.

The woman was older, but she was the one from my flashbacks. She had been there. Wherever I had gone all those years ago, this woman had been there and she recognized me.



Not everyone in the world suffers from deeply harrowing problems that affect their lives in a profoundly disturbing way, but the characters in *Noctum* do. Flashbacks, night terrors, greed and dark supernatural influences haunt these men and women.

Weaknesses are a way of defining the characters and represent a kind of inner survival horror. Even if the world is a dark and scary place a lot of the horror lives within them. It is a constant struggle to fight off inner urges, pains and outer forces that stalk them. In a way, these things can make the characters their own worst enemy.

The weaknesses presented here are based on classical concepts and you should feel free to make up your own, or tweak the existing ones to perfectly match your character. Some are darker than others and the storyteller should balance the weaknesses of the characters according to what kind of game he wishes to run.

Character may view their weaknesses in different ways, but a weakness always means trouble in one way or another. A sexual deviant might not recognize the depth of his debasement, and a junkie isn't always able to see how low he has stooped. In order to measure these things all weaknesses have Insights. They consist of four different ways of viewing one's troubles: *Guilt Tripper*, *Denial*, *Unaware* and *Aware*.

Guilt Tripper: Guilt trippers use their weakness to gain advantages from those around them by instilling a feeling of guilt. *"I had a rough childhood, it's not so strange that I use drugs. C'mon, I just need a couple of bucks for rent. I'm not gonna use it to buy drugs."*

Denial: A person in denial knows that he has a problem but won't admit to it. He does everything in his power to convince himself and those around him that he does *not* have a problem. *"What do you mean by night terrors? I don't have those. Everyone has nightmares once in a while. Drop it, I don't need a goddamn shrink!"*

Unaware: This is probably the worst type; they don't even know they have a problem. It isn't that they deny it; they are incapable of recognizing it. *"I'm not greedy, I just want to make sure my future is secure, that's all, and if that means being a bit aggressive in my business dealings, so be it."*

Aware: People that are aware of their inner problems are a rare thing indeed. Characters that are aware try to fix it to the best of their abilities. Most characters aren't aware of their worst weakness in this manner. *"Hi, my name is Rob, and I'm an alcoholic."*

All weaknesses won't match all insights. Characters that suffer from the weakness *Marked* do unmistakably know that they *are* covered in horrific scars. But they can deny it in a way by covering them up, ignoring them as much as possible, thus being in a state of self-imposed denial. Exactly how this is played out and handled is up to the

storyteller and players, but it can create intense situations. An aware alcoholic trying to talk sense into an alcoholic in denial isn't a pretty sight. The storyteller and players choose the different insights of the weaknesses during character creation.

LEVELS

The level determines the severity of a weakness. The levels go from one to three: Slight, Mediocre and Severe. The levels establish how much a weakness affects the life of a character. Whenever a weakness calls for a Cool test the level decides the modifier. A level one weakness has a modifier of +0, a level two weakness imposes a -2 modifier and a level three weakness imposes a -4 modifier. So a character with the weakness Drunk at level two would suffer a -2 modifier to his Cool roll when resisting the call of the bottle.

Some weaknesses never call for tests and in these cases the level determines the severity of the weakness. Information on this will be found under each particular weakness. Those who don't have levels sketched out in paragraphs basically work the same on all levels, and the different levels just determine the difficulty of Cool tests when a character tries to withstand triggers.

TRIGGERS & CONSEQUENCE

Most weaknesses have triggers. These are situations and circumstances that will activate the weakness to its extremes. A drug addict needs an immediate fix; the marked person is thrown into a state of self-loathing, hating their disfigured flesh, and the sinner is plagued by an overwhelming urge to discipline themselves at the spot.

Weaknesses are always active in some way, but when triggered they are more or less controlling the character. Weaknesses without a trigger described simply don't possess one as such.

After a weakness has been triggered a character is virtually controlled by it for about an hour, after which time he can make a Cool test (modifier depends on the level) to regain control. Sometimes it is impossible to do so. If a drunk goes on a binge he might be a *tad* bit too wasted or unconscious to do much of anything. As with the rest of the game mechanics these are just guidelines, and the rationale of the storyteller has final say in how the system is put to use.

Under some weaknesses there are three paragraphs marked simply 1, 2 or 3 (Slight, Mediocre and Severe). The text in these paragraphs relates to a consequence or circumstance connected to the weakness at that level.

AMNESIA

For some reason or another you have lost a large portion of your memory. It isn't a matter of minutes or days, it is a matter of years. During this period you were missing and no one (at least to your knowledge) had a clue to where you were. You have no idea what happened during these years.

You constantly search for answers and are suspicious of people you don't recollect that seem to recognize you. Whenever a trigger comes up you become obsessed with the idea of finding answers immediately.

Triggers: *A faint memory of what happened arises, flashbacks of the incident, a new lead or information, a state of sadness brought on by inebriation.*

- 1: 1-2 years missing.
- 2: 3-7 years missing.
- 3: 8-12 years missing

BIGOT

Rich, poor, criminal or whatever walk of life you are from, you scorn people that don't share your lifestyle and sentiments. Mostly this weakness is a result of upbringing.

If you are poor you blame everything on the rich blue-blooded assholes; if you are rich you blame the retarded, poor uneducated masses. Criminal bigots hate the ones that adapt, living inside the frames and grid of the corrupt governmental system.

You can talk to those you scorn but it is often apparent that it causes you great discomfort and annoyance. When they leave you mutter insults and slanderous words behind their backs.

A bigot is very hypocritical, and often lives in a kind of social bubble, not privy to the truth and real workings of the world outside his chosen associated assortments of social relationships. This tends to make him naive and often leads to trouble.

People around him that don't share his worldview find him arrogant, uninformed, and straight up unpleasant to be around, if they themselves don't share the same sentiments that is.

Whenever a bigot has to interact with the "wrong" types of people he has to pass a Cool test. If he fails it becomes apparent that he is very uncomfortable talking to the individual, which gives him a -3 modifier to all tests (except maybe intimidation or other similar circumstances) involving social skills, when dealing with the person. This doesn't apply when performing public speeches. When

the weakness is triggered the bigot starts to be generally unpleasant to those he views as “bad” folks and he will complain about them to anyone who will listen.

Triggers: *Whenever someone from the “wrong” crowd aggravates the characters’ already negative feelings, or otherwise irritates him in the least.*

CROSSOVER

It might have been an accident, attempted suicide or some other circumstance that led to your death. You were clinically dead for a period of five minutes or so. During that time you crossed over to the unknown. While being dead you dreamt of the most macabre things, but the details elude you. The workings of modern medicine brought you back to life and you thought nothing of your dreams.

The first few months everything was normal but later strange things started to happen. One night you awoke from your sleep and a badly bruised girl sat on the end of your bed. Before you could react she vanished into thin air. The next morning you saw her again, this time on the news as they pulled her body from the riverbank. When you crossed over, back to the world of the living, the dead followed.

You are a magnet for the spirits of the dead. They come to you in frightening guises and most of the time you don’t understand them. The problem is that it seems as if you mostly attract confused and angry souls that died a violent death. They have a very hard time communicating with you, and frankly scare the hell out of you. You don’t tell people about it since they would likely fit you for a straitjacket.

The levels of this weakness determine how often the dead pay you a visit. Crossover has no triggers and the storyteller has final say when the dead appear.

1: Not often, mostly when you are around the newly dead. Usually you can only hear faint voices.

2: More frequent and you hear them clearly, and see them from time to time.

3: You are never alone and you feel the presence of the dead. They show up frequently in different guises and often try to communicate with you in bizarre ways.

DARK PRESENCE

Something dark and foreboding has followed you since childhood. Sometimes the presence is stronger and sometimes it is weaker. You fear it and know that it is coming for you one of these days.

The dark presence has always been with you and wherever you go accidents and the unexplained follow. The

disappearance of the girl next door, your father’s garage that was inexplicably covered in weird symbols; you know that the presence was behind it.

Much of your time is spent being afraid of it, and you desperately try to find out what it wants. You study the occult in order to find answers. You probably live alone since you are afraid that people close to you will become harassed by this unseen presence.

1: The presence reminds you of its existence about once a week by instilling a feeling of being watched by something malicious.

2: The feeling of being watched is experienced several times a week. At least once a month it leaves physical reminders like claw marks, weird carvings or dead animals that have been torn to shreds. Sometimes, a person you have befriended has been injured in an “accident”.

3: You feel the presence breathing down your neck every day and it often leaves physical reminders. People you knew have been severely injured, grotesquely mauled.

DEFECTOR

During a period in your life you were a member of a cult, sect or other secret organization with connections to the occult. One day you realized just how sick and twisted they were, and when you no longer could put up with their perverse rituals and cruelties you left. The problem was that your old friends didn’t forget you that easily.

These days they harass and threaten you, and you know that they are capable of putting their money where their mouth is. You don’t dare to go to the police since all those crimes you committed when you were a member surely would be enough to put you away for a very long time. You move around a lot, always preparing for the worst. You probably don’t have any close friends since your constant moving won’t let you establish meaningful relationships.

1: They don’t spend that much time harassing you. You hear from them a couple of times a month and only feel watched a few times a year.

2: You hear from them more than once a week and you are sure they keep an eye on you a couple of times a month.

3: They call you several times a week and follow you around almost wherever you go.

DRUG ADDICT

You are addicted to an illegal or otherwise controlled substance. Maybe you are hooked on Vicodin or you might be a cokehead. Whatever the drug, it affects your

life negatively and damages your body; you cannot stay away from its allure for more than a couple of hours.

The habits of the drug addict are similar to those of a drunk but the addiction is much more expensive and more dangerous. Most of the time the drugs have to be obtained illegally, and this might get you into trouble with the law. Drugs are also generally expensive which might lead you to a life of crime to support your need. Few people trust a junkie.

Addiction causes several social problems and disconnects you from the world in a way similar to that of the drunk. Long-term use leads to brain damage, nerve damage, mental illness and a total bodily shutdown. Death can come even quicker since it is easy to overdose or get a hold of a substance that is downright lethal. Addicts of IV drugs might risk falling victims to septic shock, some venereal diseases and blood-transferable diseases, if the needles are shared or reused without precautions. Whenever an addict cannot feed his addiction, or tries to withstand it, a Cool test is made. If it fails the addict suffers from severe withdrawal which gives him a -1 to a -3 modifier on all tests. Often they become irritable, and if more than twenty-four hours pass the withdrawal can cause fevers, vomiting, shakes and even death depending on the drug.

Triggers: *Shock, sadness, failures, hard personal obstacles, access to large quantities of the drug of choice, extreme pressure or other unmanageable situation, betrayal, shame, severe anger, deep fears.*

1: Needs a fix once per day.

2: Needs two or more doses during a day, and can go on binges from time to time.

3: Lives in a haze of highs.

DRUNK

You suffer from an addiction but your poison of choice is alcohol. You drink to forget, to feel better for a moment and because you have a need. When you don't drink a terrible anxiety and irritable mood sets in. Your problem affects your life and clouds your judgment. Few that know about your habit trust you to handle responsibilities.

Alcohol abuse leads to brain damage, heart disease, mental illness and finally death when organs start to shut down, or when the major arteries burst. As with drug addiction you have to pass a Cool test if you cannot get a drink, or when you try to fight your habit. Alcohol withdrawal can be fatal for the drunk since the addiction is physical. Going cold turkey for more than twenty-four hours can sometimes kill a character if he has this weakness at level three.

Triggers: *Shock, sadness, failures, hard personal obstacles, extreme pressure or other unmanageable situation, betrayal, shame, severe anger, deep fears.*

1: Needs a couple of drinks per day.

2: Needs several drinks per day and is likely to go on a binge from time to time.

3: Is plastered most of the time and often drinks until unconscious.

FANATIC

The strength of your conviction is only matched by your zeal to immerse yourself in it. It might be a religion, a calling or a cause that burns in your heart. One thing is sure, and that is that it is controlling most of your life and consumes much of your time.

You think of little else and have to concentrate not to talk about your cause constantly. Time spent doing anything else than furthering your cause is often viewed as time wasted. Few people, except likeminded, can bear your company for long if you don't focus on talking less about your obsession. If someone questions your cause, or faith, you immediately spew forth a flood of explanations and arguments in attempts to prove them wrong. This is your life; you are simply a crazed fanatic.

Triggers: *Someone questions your cause, you come across something that makes you question your cause, shock, personal grief or loss, extreme stress, failure.*

FLASHBACKS

Gruesome images sometimes come back to you in quick disturbing flashes. A terrible accident, illegal experiment or post-traumatic war syndrome can cause this to happen. The flashes are incoherent visual and auditory hallucinations created from the memories of traumatic experiences.

When you have these episodes you are unable to fully comprehend all the sounds and images, but they scare you and stir up painful emotions and memories. A flash rarely lasts for longer than ten seconds but sometimes they can haunt you for as long as a whole minute. A lot of things can happen in these short periods of time. If driving, it can prove fatal.

Sometimes you lose all concepts of reality in the grip of flashbacks. This is often the case with post-traumatic syndrome related to memories of war. In these cases whole environments can seem to change and what you relive overlaps with reality.

Triggers: *Sounds, images and other stimuli that relates to your flashbacks might act as a trigger.*

GATEKEEPER

Occult phenomenon, rituals and ancient metaphysical texts fascinated you in your youth. You even performed rituals with some of your friends. But something went horribly wrong. You don't remember exactly what happened, but when you came to you were the only survivor. Your friends were torn to shreds and weird symbols were scratched all over their bodies. Whatever it was you set free that day, it still roams the world.

Sometimes you come across a news article or report on the TV depicting murders identical to those of your friends. You constantly search for answers in an attempt to gain knowledge of what you unleashed and how it can be banished from our reality. You know the responsibility lies with you. You were the gatekeeper and you let it out.

The life you lead is probably a nomadic one as you track the murders. It is quite possible that the police have taken an interest in you, since you seem to always be Johnny on the spot when these macabre murders occur. The levels indicate how often the unleashed entity kills.

- 1: Once every third month.
- 2: Once every other month.
- 3: Once a month.

GREEDY

Greed is need and cash is king. Whether you know it or not this is your motto. Your greed has no limits and you are prepared to sacrifice life, limb and the ones you love to gain more riches. In your relentless hunt for valuables and money those close to you have been hurt. You convince yourself that the importance of money surpasses all else.

People who know you and your greed seldom trust your loyalty since they know that it can be bought. The greedy always work on different ways to gain more money and wealth, and often get in trouble because of it. Whenever they see the chance of a big score, they might end up borrowing money from the wrong people just to get enough to invest.

A character with this weakness can always be bought. Whenever his loyalty towards the other characters hangs in the balance he has to make a Cool test to see if he will waver or not.

Triggers: *You hear about a "good investment", you spend time with someone that obviously has more than you and never shuts up about it, you see the opportunity to make money off someone else (steal a copyright, account number etc), you want to make an investment or a large purchase but can not afford it.*

HOMICIDAL

You can seem as calm and collected as the next guy, but when confronted with violence directed at you, something comes over you. Your response to violence is extreme, and whenever you are involved in these situations you do everything in your power to kill your opponent.

If you fight in a subway you try to toss your enemy in front of the train. When brawling you try to crush his larynx or poke his eyes out. In firefights you try to aim for the head or riddle your opponents with bullets.

If you knock someone unconscious in a fight you have to pass a Cool test; if you fail, and nobody goes in between, you will end up stomping your victim to death. Whenever you want to avoid these homicidal urges you must pass a Cool test. A character with this weakness has a fifty percent chance of ending up on the Fight option on the Fight or Flight scale, even when he chooses Flight.

Trigger: *Violence directed at the character.*

HUNTED

Maybe the law put out a warrant on you, or a crazed sect is after you. Whatever the reason a group of people or larger organization is hunting you. If they get you it won't be pretty. Close friends might have been injured or killed by your antagonists in their frenzied search for you.

The levels determine how many hunters are after you at any one time. This number doesn't represent the total amount, only how many that are sent after you. To get rid of all the pursuers you have to clear your name, exterminate the organization and so forth. Exactly what they want is up to the player and storyteller to decide, but whatever it is, the life of the character will basically be over if they catch him. Wherever the character goes the hunters are sure to follow.

- 1: An organization with local influence. They send four persons to hunt for the character.
- 2: The organization has countrywide influence. They send five to ten people to hunt the character.
- 3: Worldwide influence. Twenty to fifty people search for the character around the clock. (Do you really think you can handle it?)

INSANE HERITAGE

Most likely your condition has been passed on to you from a parent. As a child no one really paid any attention when you talked to yourself or to a wall; most thought you played with an imaginary friend. But the voice that spoke to you didn't disappear when you grew up; it became stronger for each year that passed.

It didn't take long before you realized that most people would think that you were crazy if you couldn't keep this under wraps. So you told no one, and stayed as focused as you could. The voice has been with you for years now, whispering to you, talking and even shouting at times. You don't really know what it wants or why it is with you, and you feel there is more to it than insanity passed down a bloodline.

Often it convinces you to do things and tells you horrible stories of the world and other people. You have tried medications but they have never helped, and you fear that this condition will pass on to your children as well.

The storyteller should flesh out the details of the voice. What kind of personality does it have, when does it usually start to talk and what name has it given itself? No manner of treatment has been effective as of yet.

Trigger: *The storyteller has absolute control over the voice.*

IRRITABLE

Small matters of nuisance are enough to piss you off! You might yell, or even become violent when you have to deal with the slightest annoyance. Irritable might be a result of an emotional disorder, chemical imbalance, defense mechanism or other similar cause.

Whenever you are confronted with something that irritates you all floodgates, which contain your anger, come apart immediately. Your outbursts have surely hurt those close to you and been the source of many problems. It stands to reason that many of your relationships, both romantic and platonic, have been short, chaotic and intense. You often discourage people from even striking up a meaningful relationship with you as a result of your hotheadedness.

Most characters with this weakness have a criminal record including assault, disturbing the peace and similar charges. To keep yourself under control when irritated you have to pass a Cool test. If successful you can act normally if you get to cool down for a couple of seconds.

Triggers: *Someone bumps into you hard without apologizing, a vending machine steals your money, someone cuts you off on the freeway in a bad manner, a person cuts before you in line, you get too small an amount of change in the convenience store.*

MARKED

You have no idea where you got your macabre scars or frightening tattoos, but all methods of removing them have failed. Sometimes you have awakened in the middle of the night and felt a burning sensation all over your marked skin, and in horror seen how the marks changed patterns.



You always search for answers and are ashamed of your desecrated skin. If a character has tattoos as a result of this weakness they are never stylish-looking but made in a sloppy way depicting revolting or disturbing images and texts. Due to this you have a hard time with intimacy.

The level determines how much of your body is afflicted. Triggers are situations where you can get very self-conscious about your weakness. If you fail a Cool test at these moments you become full of self-loathing and hatred, directed at your disfigured body. If your face is marked you get a -4 modifier to all tests involving good looks, and all other reasonable situations that the storyteller chooses. The weakness can sometimes help with tests that involve intimidation and such if the face is disfigured.

Triggers: *Someone asks you about your marks, you are seen naked, you see similar marks on someone else, another person shows intimate interest in you, another person already privy to your marks shows sexual interest.*

- 1: Half your body.
- 2: All but the neck and head.
- 3: Every inch of your skin.

MISANTHROPIC

The world is a messed up place and that is something everyone should realize. You only see the sinister side of mankind and the world; goodness is only coincidental. Whenever you see a heinous crime or deed on the news you chuckle and say it was to be expected. If you on the other hand see something uplifting you just mutter that these occurrences are passing and doesn't really matter when looking at the big picture.

You aren't keen on anyone and expect everyone to stab you in the back or let you down. A demeanor of gruff cynicism and social evasion doesn't really make you very likeable. Most people avoid spending personal time with you and that is just fine by you anyway.

Triggers: *Life!*

NIGHT TERRORS

Your greatest fear is sleep since your nights are filled with the most hideous nightmares imaginable. Atrocities and the unbelievably menacing haunt your every sleeping hour. You don't fully understand or even remember what you dream half the time, but the night terrors scare the hell out of you. It is likely that you haven't had more than two or three hours of continuous sleep during one night since childhood.

Why you dream these things are a mystery to you. Maybe it is a repressed memory manifesting itself or some kind of severe sleep disorder? In the end it doesn't matter, as the result is the same. You scream and wail your way through the few hours of sleep you get, and this makes you a lousy neighbor. You are constantly tired and often have a hard time focusing.

Whenever the character falls asleep a Cool test has to be made. If it fails the night terrors are so bad that he gets a -1 modifier on all his actions after he has awoken, due to sleep deprivation.

Trigger: *Sleep.*

OCD

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is a mental disorder, which has the power to ruin a person's life. It is a tragic disorder that consists of the obsession of a certain train of thought and the actions related to it. Basically anyone can become a victim of OCD. Sometimes a tragic event is the cause but often it is a harmless routine gone haywire.

There are many kinds of OCD, and this weakness is always active. Every time a character with OCD wakes up he has to make a Cool test. If it fails, he has a bad day and spends a lot of it in the grip of his OCD. If he has a good day he is only slightly affected. If a trigger activates the OCD he is totally preoccupied with the obsession, and has a hard time doing anything else. If he is unable to engage in his OCD activity when the weakness has been triggered, the individual becomes highly irritable and anxious. Below are some examples of obsessions. There are hundreds of more but these should give you an idea.

Triggers: *Shock, high levels of stress, forced to deal with a personal and severe problem, degradation.*

Cleanliness

Repeating the washing of hands and taking several showers a day. The person is constantly vacuuming, washing the dishes and scrubbing the floors in a repetitive manner.

Hoarding

Never tosses anything away from fear of throwing away something important. Often controls the trash and rummages through it to be sure nothing of value is accidentally thrown away by mistake. In many cases their homes are stuffed with things others cannot conceive holding on to. Sometimes they even pick things up from the street in the notion that they might need them someday.

Hypergraphia

Hypergraphia instills an overwhelming urge to write. What is written isn't important and in most cases the individual writes down his everyday experiences. People suffering from hypergraphia always write by hand, it is the actual movement of the hand that acts in a soothing manner. Hypographics may write on virtually anything. If they run out of paper in the middle of the night, and cannot get their hands on more they may start to write stuff on the walls. On good days it may suffice to jot down repeated words or sentences on a scrap of paper from time to time.

Order

Everything is supposed to be in a certain order and have symmetry to it. The character is obsessed with organizing everything from his books, food cans and clothing to the contents of his kitchen drawers. Everything has to be in a specific way by placement, color-coding and chronology. He even eats in a certain way depending on the food. The OCD often extends to his clothing and his general surroundings. A home of a person with this OCD is eerie in its perfection, often giving the feel of a hotel room where no one really lives.

Theology Compulsion

This compulsion concerns specific parts of theology. A certain prayer, praising of an angel or muttering of specific passages of the Bible is done around the clock. The character is afraid that a punishment of some sort will come upon him if he doesn't do these things. This compulsion doesn't

necessarily mean that the character is a churchgoer or even religious; OCD is simply about a thought and an action that have become an obsession.

Superstition Compulsion

In many ways this is similar to theology compulsion, but concerns superstition. The character spits when a black cat crosses the road, knocks on wood when he says something he is hoping for, never walks under a ladder, keeps away from mirrors in fear of breaking them (gaining seven years of bad luck) and is terrified of ravens. Also, the number thirteen is shunned like the plague and you cannot really get him to do anything other than stay indoors during Friday the thirteenth. In all likelihood the character won't even take a shower on this day, in fear of tripping and breaking his neck; the same goes for stairs, and solid foods are also avoided during this day, as the person believes he might be unlucky enough to choke.

OMINOUS PROPHECY

For some reason you know that you are preordained to commit an act that will cause a great deal of agony and suffering. Maybe you are the key that will swing open the gates of hell, or you might be destined to kill the one you love the most.

You were probably told about the prophecy as a kid by a stranger, fortune-teller or someone else. The person in question told you that there would be signs along the way and certain circumstances would arise. If you are aware of the prophecy and believe it you keep away from situations, persons and omens that might lead to its completion. Your fate is said to be inevitable and if you are a believer you still struggle to find a way to avoid it.

The levels of this weakness determine how horrible your prophecy is. Level one probably only concerns you; level two involves those around you as well while level three borders on the apocalyptic. The triggers don't activate the prophecy as such but your psychological response to it.

Triggers: *Notices an omen, walks into a situation that might have something to do with the prophecy, risks being put in a situation that might have something to do with it.*

PARANOIA

Whatever happened to you it messed you up good. You are paranoid and extremely afraid of persecution, enemies, hidden surveillance, car bombs and whatever else you might come up with.

There might be a reason for you to be afraid, and you might even know exactly who and what you are afraid of, but most of the time you are uncertain of the details of your fears. New acquaintances are hazardous and you always watch new "friends" closely. There is no doubt in your mind that your car, apartment and place of work are bugged.

You only buy groceries if they come in a completely sealed container and all the water you drink come in bottles. You never know who might poison you. Also you change your routines daily so it is harder for *them* to track you. Your "friends" might be working for *them*, which worries you a great deal.

Paranoia is always active to a certain amount, but when failing a Cool test when confronted by a trigger the character goes nuts; ripping up floorboards and basically tearing his surroundings apart in search for bugs, bombs, planted evidence and other weird things. This weakness consumes a large chunk of the character's mind and has probably cost him greatly in the ways of relationships and friends.

Triggers: *A hang-up call or a wrong number call made to the character, there is a knock on the door but no one is there, the power goes out, funny noises in the car, a stranger asks for the time, an old friend the character hasn't met in a while calls, a door-to-door salesman or Jehovah's witness knocks on the door.*

PATHOLOGICAL LIAR

Basically you are incapable of telling the truth for an extended period of time. Pathological lying can stem from a low self-esteem or an urge to present yourself as a much more impressive and capable individual than you really are. There is also a possibility that the truth hurt you a long time ago.

People that know you take all you say with a grain of salt, never entirely believing anything that comes out of your mouth. To get away with a lie isn't the main thing and most of the time you don't even consider it. The lying itself is an uncontrollable urge, and this rarely clings to any logic.

You lie copiously and cannot help it. What kind of lies you use depends on your background, personality and situation. Your deception needn't be advanced and can be a petty lie concerning an insignificant childhood memory. One of the pitfalls a pathological liar must face is the risk of weaving a fabric of lies that traps him. Soon it can become hard for him to remember whom he lied to, when, and why.

Pathological liars do lie all the time, but when a trigger sets them off the lies become more grandiose and frequent.

Triggers: *Someone accuses you of lying, someone "upstages" you with a story, you need to cover for a mistake, you have an unsolvable problem on your hands, someone tells a lie about you.*

- 1: Lies a couple of times per day.
- 2: Lies frequently every day.
- 3: Half of what comes out of your mouth is a lie.

PHOBIAS

Maybe you found your mother's festering corpse and saw the insects feasting on her, or maybe you fell down a well and almost drowned. Something has happened in your past that makes you terrified of a certain thing, situation or animal. You can have your fear centered on anything, but whatever it is you are afraid of it is something you might run into on a regular basis.

Whenever you confront the object of your fear you have to pass a Cool test. If the test succeeds you get off the hook lightly, and might only cry, hyperventilate or feel nauseous. If you fail, however, you freak out and try to get as far away as possible from the object of your fear while panting, screaming and crying. A character might even be driven to the first or second stage of Fight or Flight.

Triggers: *Confronting what you are afraid of, approaching a location where you might have to confront what you are afraid of.*

Acousticophobia- Fear of noise.
 Agrizoophobia- Fear of wild animals.
 Anthropophobia- Fear of people or society.
 Bacteriophobia- Fear of bacteria.
 Catoptrophobia- Fear of mirrors.
 Chiraptophobia- Fear of being touched.
 Claustrophobia- Fear of confined spaces.
 Clinophobia- Fear of going to bed.
 Daemonophobia- Fear of demons.
 Dromophobia- Fear of crossing streets.
 Dystychiphobia- Fear of accidents.
 Ecclesiophobia- Fear of church.
 Eosophobia- Fear of dawn.
 Ergophobia- Fear of work.
 Gerontophobia- Fear of old people.
 Hadephobia- Fear of hell.
 Logophobia- Fear of words.
 Numerophobia- Fear of numbers.
 Phasmophobia- Fear of ghosts.
 Scotophobia- Fear of darkness.
 Symbolophobia- Fear of symbolism.

SADIST

Nothing gets your juices flowing more than the agony and degradation of others. You might try to fight it but in the end you cannot help yourself. Inflicting physical and psychological pain to others fills you with great pleasure. This sadism might be the result of an abusive childhood or lack of empathy.

Whenever a sadistic character has the chance to degrade or hurt another in a compromised position he has to pass a Cool test. If he fails he will spend some time inflicting pain. The goal isn't to kill or injure, rather to inflict pain and cause psychological breakdowns. You do have some self-restraint and may resist torturing others if you are in a volatile situation. You also have the ability to restrain yourself when it comes to friends and family...most of the time at least. In some cases, if lacking a human victim, you might turn to animals to quench your thirst for pain.

Triggers: *You have a victim at your mercy, you run across a person that you may hurt or degrade without repercussion, you are exposed to violent art or graphics during an extended time.*

- 1: Minor injuries may be inflicted and abusive words are used.
- 2: More severe injuries are inflicted and intricate manners of degradation are applied.
- 3: Your methods to inflict pain and mental suffering in others would shock the Spanish Inquisition.

SEXUAL DEVIANT

For some reason or other you only get off on certain deviant sexual behavior. You are incapable of having sex under other circumstances. Sexually deviant behavior is often a result of some childhood experience.

The paraphilias vary but a deviant often fantasizes about his deviation in attempts to find new ways of exploring his sexuality. This weakness is always active, but when triggered the deviant needs instant sexual gratification.

Stop: This weakness can make some gamers uncomfortable. Both the players and the storyteller should be at terms when letting this into a game as the more perverse and criminal sexual deviations can be quite disturbing to role-play. Only a few deviations have been included.

Triggers: *Whenever sexual arousal occurs at a higher level or when you confront the object of your arousal for an extended period of time.*

Exhibitionism - Sexual arousal through the showing of one's own genitals to non-consenting victims.
Frotteurism - Sexual arousal through rubbing oneself against an unknowing stranger in public.
Necrophilia - Sexual attraction to corpses.
Necrozoophilia - Sexual attraction to the corpses or killings of animals.
Renfield's syndrome - A compulsion to drink blood as a sexually arousing act.
Telephone scatologia - Being sexually aroused by making obscene telephone calls.
Zoophilia - Emotional or sexual attraction to animals.
Zoosadism - The sexual enjoyment of causing pain and suffering to animals.

SINNER

You might be living the sin or it might be something from your past. In any case you need to be punished. Maybe you have committed a heinous sexual murder, a rape or other act. It might also be a manifestation of a religious belief. Whatever it is, no matter what kind of life you lead now, you need to be punished.

By inflicting minor injuries to yourself you atone for the sin. This might involve flogging, razor cuts or sandpaper and salt. The goal isn't to cause a large amount of injury, rather to inflict pain. Years of atonement have left several scars on you, and this often makes you shun intimacy.

Triggers: *Something reminds you of the sin, you betray someone, you get wasted or high, you meet extreme adversity.*

1: You atone one or two times a month.

2: You atone four or six times a month.

3: You atone several times a week.

TERRIBLE RELATIVE

Someone among your close relatives, probably dead now, has committed an atrocious act that is known by the general public. You have the disadvantage of possessing a striking likeness in physical appearance to your villainous relative.

Maybe your uncle was a malicious child killer or your father betrayed his country, costing hundreds of lives. Whatever it was people know about it and condemn the terrible acts. More than once you have received hate mail or cleaned the walls of your house from slanderous and scornful graffiti.

Even if you find someone that genuinely doesn't care about your likeness in appearance, and closeness in relationship to the relative, you have a hard time trusting that they are sincere, and often reject their friendship. At one point you did interviews but since a reporter angled the story to make you out as a monster you shun the attention of the media, even if you get paid. The only thing you can do now is to fight the rumors to prove that you are nothing like your relative even though you bear the physical likeness.

This weakness doesn't really have any triggers; the people around the character simply react to him.

1: The relative made a fatal error that indirectly caused suffering and pain to many. Some speculate that it indeed wasn't a mistake but a conscious act. The act is known in most parts of the country you live in.

2: The relative made a conscious decision knowing it would lead to the death and suffering of many innocents indirectly. The act is known throughout the whole country and maybe some bordering countries.

3: The relative consciously committed sadistic and atrocious acts that led to the suffering and death of many innocents. Maybe he was a war criminal and committed genocide or perhaps the relative was one of the most infamous and brutal serial killers of our time. The act is known worldwide.

UNKNOWING WITNESS

Someone, an organization or maybe even *something* believes that you have seen that which no one was supposed to see. Threatening calls, terrible letters and other warnings constantly haunt you. They say you will meet your end in an unimaginable way if you tell anyone what you know.

The problem is that you cannot remember ever seeing something that could cause such upheaval.

Some evenings you have seen people watching your window from across the street, and at other times you have been followed. This makes it hard to trust new people and you usually keep some distance to those you know since you don't want them to get hurt. You have called the cops so many times that they basically hang up the phone when they hear you want to file a complaint.

You try to find out what is going on but whenever you start to dig it doesn't take long until the phone rings, and you know what kind of conversation that awaits you. If there are any forms of triggers that might instigate an aggravation of the harassments, only the storyteller is privy to them since the character has no idea of what he might have seen. The levels give an indication of how often these unknown individuals harass the character.

1: A couple of times a month.

2: At least once a week.

3: More than once a week.

VENGEANCE

Someone has subjected you to something horribly atrocious or in some way ruined your life, and for that you crave vengeance. You might not even know who has done this to you but most of your time is spent finding out. If you do know who is responsible, something stands in your way. Maybe you don't know where the person is or he might be under heavy guard, or you might even have a special kind of revenge in mind that takes some time to execute.

You constantly remind yourself of what happened and relive the event over and over in your mind, focusing your hatred even more. Most of the time you think about it and you surround yourself with notes, documents and other leads that might help in your lust for vengeance. You have a hard time concentrating on anything else.

The hate scares those who know about it in its intensity, and your obsession with getting even comes in the way of many friendships and relationships.

Triggers: *A new lead turns up, experiences a similar situation, becomes strongly reminded of what happened by another person.*

1: Spends a couple of days a month in search of vengeance.

2: Almost half of your time is devoted to your vengeance.

3: Basically, nothing else matters.

Example: *Meet Kate, a Paranoid, Drunken, Sinner of a homicide detective. She has just messed up a case and the killer walked. The storyteller decides that this is a rather big failure and it acts as a trigger for the weakness Drunk. She has the weakness at a Mediocre level, and has to pass a Cool test with a -2 modifier. The test is made and she fails. Kate leaves the office and goes to the nearest bar and starts to slam down tequilas. After a while she gets quite drunk, and the storyteller says she starts to think about the man she killed when she was young (Sinner). The train of thought is a result brought on by the melancholy she slips into as she drinks. The level of her weakness, Sinner, is Slight and to withstand it she has to pass a normal Cool test. She's unlucky and fails again. Kate, in a drunken stupor, staggers to the grimy bathroom of the bar. She looks into the mirror, sobbing, and smashes it. She uses the broken pieces to cut at her arms to atone. People stare at her as she stumbles out and leaves the locale bleeding. After a while a man comes up to her on the street; he sees that she is drunk and bleeding. He offers his help. But being in a particularly nasty mood, the storyteller deems that this is enough to trigger her weakness Paranoid (she sees it as being manhandled by a total stranger, he probably works for THEM). Her weakness Paranoid is at a Mediocre level. Guess what? She fails her Cool test. Kate becomes scared of the man and stumbles away, she also thinks someone might have slipped her something in her drink. Afraid of her own shadow she manages to get home to her apartment. But she doesn't feel safe. Someone might have installed surveillance! While rubbing salt in her wounds to atone she takes out a bottle of whiskey and drinks more as she tosses her apartment, looking for hidden wires and cameras.*

FYI

The somewhat extreme example above shows how bad it can get if a character is very unlucky (and if the storyteller is a bit nasty). You don't need to constantly make weaknesses come into play at every opportunity you get, but whenever you deem that a trigger is severe enough, they kick in, and can cause a downward spiral. Triggers are personal, and you have to adjust them to the overall drama and situation. A paranoid drug addict doesn't lose himself to the paranoia every time he gets his high on, but he is much more prone to do so while under the influence. Some triggers consist of "failure" and you have to remember that a failure is very personal. What kind of failure that actually triggers a weakness is subjective, and strongly tied into the character, the life he leads, and his personal view on things.

You should also adapt weaknesses somewhat to the current situation. An Irritable person would not start to throw around insults and haymakers in the middle of a dance floor just because people dance into him from time to time. But if someone were to slam into him hard he would probably react. Weaknesses should never come in the way of a story, they should only add to the overall flavor and depth of the character and story alike.

Weaknesses are an important part of the characters and it is essential for the players and the storyteller to get an

idea of how these have affected the lives of the characters. What does the apartment of a degenerate drunk look like? How much money does a drug addict spend each week on his habit, and how does he support it?

Sometimes a combination of weaknesses may prove very interesting for the player and detrimental for the character. How would a drunk, suffering from OCD involving cleanliness, cope? He is unlikely to have the energy to clean up his apartment (that probably is a mess) all the time but his OCD makes it impossible for him to stand it. Will he spend his nights at hotels or will he try to hook up with a lover that takes care of the cleaning?

One thing a storyteller should count on is the fact that players are innovative when dealing with the weaknesses of their characters. What would happen if a player with the weakness Terrible Relative decides to have his character

undergo plastic surgery? This would nullify the weakness (hey, that's no fun). In this case maybe it proves that the weakness is more mysterious, the character will discover that his appearance will renew itself after a while. Suddenly he realizes that something more than mere circumstances is responsible for his fate.

There are many more types of weaknesses that a character may have. Feel free to come up with all kinds of weaknesses to mould characters. The storyteller should also feel free to give the characters weaknesses that the players aren't aware of. These are often connected to the hidden world. Why not let a character become a carrier of a permanent stain of evil (see Afflictions) or have the markings on his body form ciphers he has to crack in order to find answers? There are hundreds of alternatives that may help build the story and add even more depth to the characters.

The line between my nightmares, my flashbacks and what is real always seems to blur. I don't want to go to sleep, I don't dare to. I swipe some of the blue pills off the dirty table, toss them in my mouth and take a swig of cheap whiskey. The pills ... some concoction of amphetamines and painkillers, I think. As I sit at the table, I look out through the motel room window. It's raining. It's night. I don't like the rain; too many bad memories.

I disassemble and reassemble my sidearm for the fiftieth time this evening. It calms me down. But it doesn't erase the blood on the table or the chunks of flesh on my combat knife. Nor does the dried blood on my hands evaporate. I look over at the bed. The body is still there, eviscerated, contorted, dead. Did I murder someone in a fit of blind psychosis? Or am I having a nightmare or a flashback?

Like I said, the line between my nightmares, my flashbacks and what is real seems to blur. I take another drink from the bottle. I decide to strip my gun again. Maybe the blood and the body will be gone by the time I put the weapon back together?

I hope it's just my fucked up head playing tricks on me like it's done before. If not, I have killed an innocent and then I have to run. Again...

CHAPTER 5

SKILLS & TRAININGS

From the journal of Olivia Lake

After I had recovered from the insane shit that went down in the mental hospital, I met up with Caleb. I decided to tell him only that Gina Rodriguez had provided me with some good leads, not about the connection she had to my past or the bizarre flashback I had experienced.

After we crawled through some databases for a couple of hours I got a call from Victor, and a disturbing call at that. I could hear him running and panting in a panic. He yelled that he was being chased and after that I had heard a gunshot. Then the line went dead. First I froze, at a loss for what to do, but then I turned to Caleb and asked him to trace the call. He traced the GPS, and after a minute he got me a location: an industrial area down by the harbor.

Bolting from the apartment, I called Huxley and told her that Victor needed backup. I felt that my knife and camera weren't up to the task. I gave her the address and she said she was going to blaze over. I got into my car and punched it, trying not to skid off the road in the nighttime rain. I had no idea what I would do if I got there before her but I couldn't just sit around doing nothing. I wanted to call the cops but they would probably show up too late, and if they ran into Huxley armed without a carry permit . . . well, I decided not to.

I climbed over the chain-link fence once I arrived. Goddamn security gate. And it seemed that the electricity in the area was out. I got my camera out and flipped on the nightvision, pleased with myself for trading up to a waterproof model. A gunshot rang out as I turned the corner. I scanned the darkness through the screen and picked him up. Victor was coming toward me, blind in the night. He held his gun in one hand and he was hurt, stumbling forward in the darkness. I was about to yell to him and turn on the camera light but then I saw them; shadows that materialized out of thin air, darker than the night around him, their eyes just glowing orbs. At that moment two thoughts raced through my mind: What the hell were they and what the fuck was I supposed to do?

SKILLS

Skills consist of abilities a character has learned throughout his life. They require some form of experience, training, or education to obtain. There are millions of skills and it would be impossible to cover them all, but some of the most relevant ones have been listed. Players and storytellers should feel free to create their own skills, but in doing so care and consideration should be taken. Never create skills that are all-encompassing, covering several fields at once. Also, consider if the skill is actually useful, and adds to the gaming experience.

There are also Trainings and these depend on Skills and grant special insights and abilities. Often they cover a rather narrow or specialized field that is useful but too specific to be a Skill. Skills have no ranks. When you possess a Training you roll against fitting linked Skill. More on Trainings after the Skill section.

ACADEMICS

Most know some basic history but this skill measures theoretical knowledge learned through universities and other academic institutions on a high level. History of Literature, Archeology and Mythology are just some of the disciplines that are included in this skill. Dots in this skill doesn't necessarily mean that the character has a degree or a diploma. Some are simply voracious readers and autodidacts, harnessing massive amounts of knowledge without setting foot in a university or school. A rank of 3 indicates a Bachelor's Degree level of knowledge, while a rank of 4 indicates a PhD. At rank 5 the character possess the knowledge of a PhD graduate who graduated with honors.

Typical Aptitudes:

Brains

ATHLETICS

Whenever you need to climb, run, jump, or engage in any similar physical activity, Athletics comes into play. This Skill shows how much time you have spent honing your coordination, nimbleness and speed.

Typical Aptitude:

Run: *Quickness*

Jump: *Quickness*

Climb: *Brawn*

Swim: *Quickness*

Throw long distances: *Brawn*

Throw shorter distances with more precision: *Quickness*

Desperate and crazy acts, the success of which you have no real way of estimating, like jumping blindly down a shaft where there "should be" a cable some meters down if you remember correctly: *Gut Feeling*

CLOSE COMBAT

Simply put, you know how to fight with melee weapons or your bare hands. Your fighting style is up to you to determine. The end result is the same: this Skill gives you the proficiency to defend yourself or knock someone out.

Typical Aptitude:

Dexterous styles: *Quickness*

Strong-handed styles: *Brawn*

COMPUTERS

Most people can install a piece of software or a game and navigate the Internet but with this skill more advanced actions can be completed. Computer Use gives the ability to

write programs and perform advanced system checks. The recommended time applies to programming and advanced system tasks. In order to be able to hack computers and security systems you have to have the Hacking Training.

Typical Aptitudes: Brains

CONTACTS

This is more than a skill; it measures the character's grid of viable allies and associates. Each invested skill point symbolizes a person that is a major contact the character knows. What goes is up to the storyteller, but a player wanting to have the President as a contact should be denied that privilege, for obvious reasons. A customs agent or mob boss on the other hand would be acceptable. If a character has a rank of 4 it would mean that he has four major contacts. The storyteller decides the character's exact relationship to these individuals.

Most contacts demand favors in return, and if not looked after, contacts will withdraw from the character. It is also possible to use this as a normal skill. If a character wishes to get hold of one of his major contact's "underlings", he can make a skill test to see if he gets hold of that person. This skill is the only one that cannot be bought later on in the game with experience, and has to be earned through gameplay.

Typical Aptitudes: Clout

CRYPTOGRAPHY

When confronted with codes, anagrams and puzzles, this skill can come in handy. Cryptography is used to decipher various codes. Some need a code key, a string of letters, numbers, rules or symbols before they can be decoded. Without this skill, a person can solve simple anagrams and puzzles but cannot under any circumstances solve advanced ciphers. A cryptographer is also good at creating his own codes and puzzles.

Typical Aptitude:

Noticing a hidden code/anagram: *Attention*

Solving or creating a code/anagram: *Brains*

DEPROGRAMMING

In the world of *Noctum* dangerous cults and sects are prevalent and their methods of indoctrination are brutal and effective. Deprogramming gives you insight into what systems they use, how they recruit and indoctrinate members. It also gives you the ability to deprogram someone who has fallen victim to indoctrination (or to actually indoctrinate someone).

The skill is a combination of psychology, psychiatry, medicine and fine manipulation meshed with strong armed interrogation techniques. There are no real handbooks, this knowledge comes only by experience. Deprogramming someone is hard as it often requires that the deprogrammer holds the person they wish to deprogram captive. It is a physically and mentally straining ordeal for all those involved. More details can be found in the Broken Mind Chapter.

FAST TALK

When you need to lie, negotiate or persuade someone in an informal environment where tact and subtlety aren't an issue, you can fast talk them. This Skill can be used to drop a pick-up line, haggle with a marketplace merchant or to carouse a party.

Typical Aptitudes:

Talk your way past a doorman: *Clout*

Come up with a good lie on the spot: *Reaction*

Get the sense that someone's lying: *Gut Feeling*

Make a pass at someone: *Clout*

FIRST AID

You know the basics of medical care when it comes to simple wounds. You know CPR, how to stop bleeding and how to prevent infections. You can also set bones and handle trauma. It takes about thirty seconds to administer first aid, or a minute if the damage is severe. With a rank of 3 you know how to administer injections, proper doses of pain killers and can set IVs. At this level you have the same knowledge as an EMT. With 4 you're at the level as a registered trauma nurse and with a rank of 5 you also possess the knowledge of a surgical nurse. At this level you can perform simple surgeries with a -2 modifier and can close up after a surgical procedure has been completed.

Performing first aid will immediately restore 2 fatal or 4 bashing hit points. This can only be done once per wound and it can only be applied to the freshest wound. So it would be impossible to do it over and over again in order to fully restore someone's health.

Typical Aptitude:

Stabilize a bleeding wound: *Quickness*

Set a bone or pull a joint straight: *Brawn*

Administer simple injections or set an IV: *Attention*

Treat burns: *Attention*

Perform Surgery: *Attention or Quickness depending on the situation*

Stabilize fatigue trauma (hypothermia, dehydration, etc): *Brains*

FOCUS

This skill allows you to use relaxation and still mind techniques, or the experience of a lifelong adjustment to psychological pressure, to gain control when you are faced with extreme stress or shock. It can also help you recuperate after suffering psychological damage. Overall it helps you in the face of adversity and trepidation. And those whom are gifted also needs this skill in order to use their abilities.

Typical Aptitude: *Cool*

FORENSICS

This is a skill that applies several sciences in order to analyze trace evidence, ballistics, fingerprints, tire tracks, fibers, DNA and similar things. You know your way around a crime lab and its databases. You are also well versed in Forensic Entomology. By studying insect feedings, eggs and larvae in a body you're capable of establishing a timeline and geographical specifics. You have a deep knowledge of insects and how they develop, feed and grow. By putting this knowledge in context with a body you can make rather astute assessments. Even if a body has been moved to another location, the insects often remain for a while. This lets you trace bodies to different locations and circumstances. Forensics doesn't make you particularly good in the field (collecting evidence and such) as most of your work consists of analyzing collected evidence and information.

Typical Aptitude: *Brains or Attention depending on the circumstances.*

Use entomology to determine time and possible region of death if the body has been moved: *Brains*

Using forensic databases to match boot, tire, fingerprints or other impressions on file: *Attention*

Perform ballistic analysis on a bullet: *Brains*

Perform ballistic bullet trajectory analysis on the scene: *Attention*

Comparing DNA and fibers to the forensic database: *Brains*

INTERROGATION

When you need information from someone, the art of Interrogation is vital. Interrogation is a blend of soft and hard verbal tactics, the reading of body language and mind games. In order to make use of it, you need a form of leverage. This can be as simple as leaning on a snitch or having a person in an interrogation room. What stipulates leverage depends on the person being interrogated, what type of information one wishes to get and the overall circumstances.

Typical Aptitude:

Reading a suspect's body language (if rather obvious) and letting it guide you to their weak spots: *Attention.*

Gaining a suspect's trust by relating to him: *Gut Feeling*

Read between the lines of a conversation: *Attention*

Subtly weave in questions in a seemingly innocent conversation: *Clout*

Eavesdropping on a nearby conversation and getting the gist of it in a rowdy environment (like a bar): *Attention*

INVESTIGATION

As a skill, Investigation is both a theoretical and practical one. The skill is used to process a crime scene. The collection of fibers, substances, fingerprints and GSR (Gun Shot Residue) is just some of the knowledge gained by mastery of this skill. An investigator also knows how to reconstruct an event using the trace evidence. To write down statements, collecting witness reports, and knowing which part of a scene to seal off, is also useful knowledge granted by this skill.

A CSI kit is needed to professionally gather evidence. Below the time and effort required to process a "normal" murder scene in an average apartment, with one victim involved, is presented. It is, however, possible to do a "snapshot" investigation, which allows an investigator to make a preliminary walkthrough of the scene, coming up with theories, without the aid of any equipment.

You also know the basic laws connected to evidence procurement, search and seizures, probable cause and chain of custody.

Typical Aptitude:

Collecting technical evidence from a scene: *Attention*

Interpret blood spatter: *Attention*



Instruct officers to properly seal off the scene, go door to door and write down witness reports: *Clout*

Do a snapshot reconstruction (how did they fight, how did the victim and assailant move, etc.): *Gut Feeling*

Quickly take charge over a fresh scene where everything is in disarray and it's unclear who is in charge: *Reaction*

Find a piece of evidence or a lead that is far-fetched, or otherwise make an almost impossible forensic connection: *Gut Feeling*

LAW

When navigating the courts and halls of justice this skill is vital. Law gives insight into the inner workings of the justice system. You can draft legal documents, know how to navigate various law databases and know several important precedents by heart. The skill also makes you good at jury selection, taking depositions and arguing your case in court. There are many types of law such as Civil Law, Criminal Law, Economic Law, Federal Law, Maritime Law and Property Law. You are probably specialized in one particular type but with the storytellers permission (if you are the only lawyer in a story for example) you are knowledgeable of all of them.

Typical Aptitude:

Argument in court: *Clout*

Research: *Brains*

MEDICINE

Modern medicine is a wide and advanced discipline. Anyone possessing the Medicine skill can administer first aid since this only requires the most basic of medical knowledge covered in med school. Medical experimentation, treatments and its many applications vary widely in their scope and complexity. It is up to the storyteller to pin down the difficulty and time needed to complete different tasks. Growing some standard bacteria would probably be a quick and standard fare, while conducting advanced genetic research would be a very intricate and time consuming multi-step process.

Brains is the primary Attribute involved when conducting medical experiments, autopsies, or when administering treatments. A rank of 2 in medicine gives you the same knowledge as a medical student in mid residency and with a rank of 3 you are a qualified doctor. A rank of 4 or more indicates that you are qualified to be a professor or hold a high-ranking position such as chief surgeon.

Typical Aptitude:

Performing Surgery: *Quickness for regular surgery and Attention when dealing with neurological procedures.*

OCCULT

The world is filled with different beliefs that aren't quite religion (well, some are) but they are too rigorous and advanced to be regarded as loose superstition. Occult gives insight into these beliefs and practices. Occult covers demonology, ghosts, vampires, lycanthropes, Wicca, Voodoo, Candomblé, and many different magical beliefs, beings and groups. Occultists have the rudimentary familiarity regarding Fortune Telling, Numerology and Astrology, but not the actual skills or the knowledge required to use them. Also, the skill contains information on symbols, dates, places and written works throughout the ages that have been deemed important by the occult community. Brains is used most of the time when dealing with the occult.

Typical Aptitude:

Research: *Brains*

Discerning obscure symbols blended together in a sigil: *Attention*

Accurately drawing an occult symbol: *Quickness*

PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Parapsychology balances the occult with pure science. A haunted house, for example, is only considered to be a place where the residual energies of the deceased reside. Lycanthropes and vampires are deemed not to exist, and if they do, they have to be an evolutionary offshoot of some kind. Magical rituals are only believed to channel the innate psychic abilities of an individual, and fortune telling is considered nothing more than educated guessing.

Parapsychologists believe in the "supernatural" but only from a scientific viewpoint. They use advanced equipment to measure and record unexplained events to put them into a scientific perspective. One way to record and gain insight into the residual energies of the deceased is through EVP (Electronic Voice Phenomena), which involves recording static in order to snap up messages "from the other side". Most parapsychologists have some knowledge of the occult but this knowledge cannot be compared to that of a person who studies the occult.

Typical Aptitude:

Setting up a paranormal surveillance grid (cameras, IR cameras, thermometers and such) in a house: *Attention.*

Recollecting information: *Brains*

PHOTO & FILM

Everyone can snap off a few pictures or film with a video camera but to get good footage, real skill is needed. Camera Use gives the knowledge needed to use all kinds of cameras and camera equipment in order to take high-quality footage, even under poor conditions. The skill also

gives the ability to clean up and edit photographic material and strips of film, but this is impossible to try if one hasn't invested in the skill. Those with this skill also have an impressive knowledge of equipment related to the field as well as insight into known works and the big names in the business.

Typical Aptitude:

Photographing or filming: *Attention*

Editing: *Brains*

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology lets you understand other people and their problems. With this skill it is possible to treat psychological problems to help people in need. The time and difficulty to treat a person depend on the severity and nature of the ailment. The exact details concerning psychoanalysis are covered in the Broken Mind chapter. Beyond curing another's ailments, you may also study people with problems, setting diagnosis and even trace the roots of their problems.

Typical Aptitude:

Taking accurate notes during a session: *Attention*

Diagnosing and compiling a report: *Brains*

Holding a therapy session: *Clout*

RED TAPE

This skill reflects your ability to navigate any bureaucracy. You know what forms to sign, which applications to send and you know the bureaucratic routine of most businesses and governmental agencies. Red Tape gives you insights into the laws surrounding these things as well and you can create or follow a paper trail. Publishing contracts, deeds to a farmhouse or proof of ownership for a dog; it doesn't matter, you are able to understand and write up any type of contract. You are also able to notice discrepancies which would indicate a forgery.

Typical Aptitude:

Identifying a forgery: *Attention*

Drafting a document: *Brains*

Looking a document over: *Attention*

Track/create a paper trail: *Brains*

REPAIRS

You are able to build and fix mechanical and electronic devices and contraptions. It is possible to jury-rig smaller problems with improvised tools. Problems that are more severe require spare parts and the correct tools. With Repairs you can also hotwire cars.

Typical Aptitude:

Fix a mechanical engine problem: *Quickness*

Fix an electrical engine problem: *Attention*

Run a system diagnostics: *Attention*

Track and locate a power drain/surge: *Brains*

Find an obscure or unlikely problem in an engine or other device: *Gut Feeling*

Sabotage an engine and make it look like a natural error or breakdown: *Brains*

Create a blueprint for a device: *Brains*

Interpret a blueprint: *Attention*

RHETORIC

Where Fast-Talk is a quick, dirty and pushy way of getting what you want, Rhetoric is a subtle, methodical and tactful approach which doesn't ruffle quite as many feathers. Innuendo, veiled threats and the guise of sincerity make up some of the core elements of this Ability. It can be used to give speeches and to negotiate in the official arena, where tact is of the essence. It also grants the linguistics skills needed to get your message across in writing, and can be used to write such things as speeches, articles and novels.

Typical Aptitude:

Hold a short and spontaneous speech: *Reaction*

Write a longer speech: *Brains*

Give a longer speech: *Clout*

Write a news article: *Attention*

Write a fictional short story/novel: *Gut Feeling*

SCIENCE

Modern science offers a variety of disciplines and applications. What they all have in common is that new findings and discoveries are made through experimentation and the testing of theories. Experimentation requires the proper equipment, suitable workspace and applicable theory. The time it takes to perform an experiment all depends on how encompassing and multi-staged it is. In the end it is decided by the storyteller.

Typical Aptitude:

Remembering a piece of information: *Brains*

Observing a new scientific procedure and remembering the basics: *Attention*

Continuing another scientist's experiment with adequate notes and background information on hand: *Gut Feeling*

Conducting an experiment: *Brains*

SEARCH

This reflects how well you've honed your active perception. You can look for an enemy in hiding, pat someone down effectively or search a room. Anytime the character wishes to actively search for something, this Skill kicks in. In cases where the character has a chance of discovering something reflexively (the glare of a sniper scope, the click of a mine under his foot), the storyteller rolls their Attention as an automatic action, representing their natural perception.

Typical Aptitude: *Attention*

SECURITY

A security system can consist of something as simple as a mechanical door lock, or as complex as the computerized surveillance system of a classified research facility. This skill allows you to bypass, circumvent and coordinate these systems. Even if you're not good at computers, you can breach most systems as you don't go through the computers but hook in directly to the circuitry, wires and boards. On the simpler end you can hotwire cars and pick door locks. Security also gives insight into the theoretical and practical layout of a system (including guards, guard dogs, fences and similar things). The Ability enables you to set up these systems to be as effective as possible as well as use that knowledge to effectively infiltrate a secure location.

Make an educated guess concerning possible security layouts/systems in place in an installation: *Gut Feeling*

Personally install security equipment: *Attention*

Bypass mechanical lock: *Quickness*

Bypass electronic lock: *Attention*

Bypass electronic circuitry (alarms, cameras): *Quickness*

Bypass circuitry under stress (such as when the alarm will be triggered within seconds): *Cool*

SHOOTING

Rifles, shotguns, SMGs and any weapon that shoots projectiles can be fired using this Ability. You can also maintain most standard weapons and have theoretical knowledge about them, as well.

Typical Aptitude:

Shooting: *Attention*

Quick draw and shoot: *Reaction*

STEALTH

Stealth lets you sneak, hide and tail someone. It can be useful in many situations. Maybe you want to tail someone in the dark alleys of the Outer Circle in Claret, sneak past a guard or hide from someone? Stealth is all about evasion and keeping a low profile.

Typical Aptitude:

Tail someone: *Attention*

Hide: *Quickness*

Sneak: *Quickness*

Hide object/person: *Brains*

STREETWISE

The seedy underbelly of society is divulged by this skill. A person with Streetwise knows how to fit in among criminals, can identify gang colors and mob bosses and has a general take idea of the value of stolen goods. Whenever involved in criminal activity such as drug negotiations, soliciting, finding a fence or looking to buy a stolen object, streetwise is pivotal. Aptitudes vary depending on situation. Brains might be used when trying to evaluate a suitable price, Clout when negotiating and Attention when telling discreet gang markings apart from each other.

Typical Aptitude:

Spotting who might be a criminal in a bar (gang member, fence, what-have-you): *Gut Feeling*

Notice if someone is planning to mug you or is about to pick a pocket: *Attention*

Figuring the rudimentary hierarchy of a criminal organization after spending some time with the members (and just observing): *Brains*

SURVIVAL

If caught in the wild without food, shelter or direction, survival can save your life. With survival a person can navigate using the stars, find food, water, and shelter in the wild. You are also well versed in creating traps such as deadfalls and snares. Survival also allows you to track and hunt animals, craft tools from what you can get your hands on and makes something of a botanist when it comes to plants, herbs, berries and roots.

Typical Aptitude:

Tracking: *Attention*

Building shelter: *Quickness*

Foraging: *Attention*

Setting up snares: *Gut Feeling*

Making fire from scratch: *Attention*

Navigating using the sun and the stars: *Brains*

VEHICLE

Vehicle is a broad term but ranks in this allows you to drive a car and possibly a motorcycle and larger vehicles such as a truck. All are assumed to be able to drive during normal circumstances and can do so without any ranks in this skill, but during chases, stunt driving or similar situations rolls have to be made. In order to be able to fly a plane, drive a tank or steer a boat you have to possess the proper training.

Typical Aptitude:

Stunt driving (taking fast curves, jumping and ramming): *Attention*

Avoiding sudden obstacles: *Reaction*

Finding the ones you followed when they suddenly disappeared (Go left! Yes, I'm sure, turn left now!): *Gut Feeling*

TRAININGS

Trainings are used to illustrate certain areas of expertise. Instead of creating a long skill list, the skills available are linked to trainings which a player can acquire for his character. Every training has a prerequisite, usually the only requirements is a certain rank in a linked skill. For example, in order to be able to buy the Auto Fire training the character must have a rank of 2 or more in the Shooting skill. The Skill used is listed by the Training. Use the information by the Skill in question to determine appropriate Aptitude depending on the situation.

AUTO FIRE

Prerequisite: *Shooting 2*

Skill: *Shooting*

This training allows you to use the auto fire functions with weapons such as sub machine guns and assault rifles. Without this training you will suffer a -3 modifier when using auto fire.

ARCHEOLOGY

Prerequisite: *Academics 2*

Skill: *Academics*

This training does not only add to you academic knowledge when it comes to archeology, it gives you the ability to safely excavate, restore and evaluate finds. You know how to set up a dig and lead others in the field as well as you are a very capable excavator yourself. Brains, Attention and Quickness are the most usual Aptitudes depending on if you are restoring, digging or researching.

BOATING

Prerequisite: *Vehicle 1*

Skill: *Vehicle*

You are capable of maneuvering small and large boats and ships. You are a capable navigator, know how to read a radar and the basics of maritime law. Without this training a person might be able to use simple motorboats and such but will do so with a -2 modifier.

BOOBY-TRAPS

Prerequisite: *Repairs 1, Survival 1*

Skill: *Repairs*

Using everything from household chemicals to gunpowder and actual firearms you can design a variety of deadly traps. You can't create advanced explosives, triggers or timers but you can mix together simple incendiary and explosive devices. Tripwires that triggers shotguns or lamps filled with flammable materials are typical examples, as are spring-loaded traps and electrified door handles.

CUT & SLING

Prerequisite: *Streetwise 2 or Science 1*

Skill: *Streetwise or Science*

You are able to cut drugs and have a good overview of their going price on the street. You are also able to create drugs such as amphetamines as well as you can cook crack and grow weed.

ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE

Prerequisite: *Security 2 and Computers 1*

Skill: *Security for installing devices and Computers for monitoring.*

This training makes you well versed in modern electronic surveillance. You know how to place bugs, upload roving bugs to cell-phones and how to snatch up data traffic. If given access, you also know how to manage surveillance satellites. You are equally good at setting up countermeasures for these methods.

EXPLOSIVES

Prerequisite: *Repairs 2*

Skill: *Repair*

With explosives you can assemble and defuse explosive devices. You can also study a bombing site and fragments from a detonated bomb to determine what kind of detonator, explosive and components that were involved. This training also gives you insight into a wide arrange of



triggers spanning from simple fuses to highly advanced chemical and electronic triggers. You are also capable of creating simple explosives using over the counter chemicals.

FORGERY

Prerequisite: *Red Tape 2 and Computers 1*

Skill: *Red Tape to identify and evaluate false documents (or to create simple analog copy/paste IDs) and Computers while creating advanced documents.*

You are able to forge documents, checks, ID-cards and even currency. Making high quality forgeries is quite hard and expensive and require high-end gear and material. The right paper, ink, plastic and high-tech printers are required in order to create all the details such as the holographic image in modern ID-cards. Today many even include a microchip. And forging currency is also a costly process. However, if you are going to create fake IDs that will let underage folks buy alcohol or get into a club you only need a high-quality printer, a digital camera and a laminator. If you are to create a passport that will stand up to the scrutiny of airport security you have to acquire some serious gear and material.

FORTUNE TELLING

Prerequisite: *Occult 1*

Skill: *Occult*

This skill gives the ability to interpret omens and signs to foretell a person's fate. It gives insight into everything from economical fortune to love. There are several methods. Some use tarot cards, others read the palms of the hands, tea leaves or glare into crystal balls. Whether you believe in it or not is another matter.

HACKING

Prerequisite: *Computers 3*

Skill: *Computers*

Hacking provides the know-how regarding the circumvention of computer security systems such as coded barriers. Hacking makes it possible to alter, steal and destroy information and gain control over slave units (units that the hacked master computer controls). A system often consists of several layers of protection and each layer needs to be hacked. Sometimes two hackers are pitted against each other to gain control of the same system, and in these cases contested tests are made.

HANDWRITING ANALYSIS

Prerequisite: *Academics 1 and Psychology 2*

Skill: *Psychology*

With this skill it's possible to compare handwritings to find a match; of course you need something to compare it to. Beyond this, the skill has a psychological factor, which lets you make a rough sketch of what kind of

person has written a text by finding pointers in the style of handwriting. You're also capable of making well-informed guesses of someone's education by analyzing their choice of words and literary structure. When making the latter analysis the text can be written on a computer as you don't need the actual handwriting for this. As mentioned, many of the analysis need a comparison, but not all. With the aid of a profiler even more can be determined.

- *Determine if the subject is male or female.*
- *Sketch out rough personality traits based on handwriting (e.g. a subject who is struggling to maintain a vertical slant is probably trying to maintain a detached and impersonal attitude, while suffering from self-centeredness.)*
- *Sketch out the state of mind of the subject (while he was writing if personal) by analyzing the choice of words and linguistic structure.*
- *Compare a subject's handwriting to earlier samples in order to find out if a text was written under duress or another state of mind (fright for example).*
- *Compare handwriting with earlier samples in order to establish authenticity.*
- *Compare style of writing (choice of words and such) with subjects' earlier texts in order to establish authenticity.*

HEAVY WEAPONS

Prerequisite: *Shooting 3 or Repairs 1 and Shooting 2.*

Skill: *Shooting while actually using the weapon and Repairs to fix jams or advanced adjustments.*

Gunnery is the skill that gives the ability to handle heavy weapons. These include machineguns, rocket launchers, grenade launchers, mortars and flamethrowers. Without this skill a -4 modifier is applied when handling heavy weapons since they are advanced in their workings. Sometimes a person might not even know how to work them, or get injured in his attempts, due to the unfamiliarity of safety procedures pertaining to the weapons in question.

LINGUISTICS

Prerequisite: *Academics 1*

Skill: *Academics*

Linguistics is the knowledge of languages other than your own. Each rank in Academics gives you insight into two other languages beyond your own. You have the ability to talk, write the language in question more or less fluently. Understanding ancient or unusual dialects, translating advanced passages and comprehending someone who talks very fast might require a roll against an appropriate modifier. Brains + Academics is used.

MARTIAL ARTS

Prerequisite: *Close Combat 3 or Athletics 1 and Close Combat 2.*
Skill: *Close Combat*

There are probably hundreds of martial arts but which type you know is inconsequential. You might be trained in Krav Maga, boxing or just be a seasoned street fighter that have developed his own style. Knowing martial arts gives you some basic benefits and some additional moves dependant on your skill rank in Close Combat and Athletics combined.

Basic Benefits: You get +1 extra to your defense when going into full defense and your Base Damage increases with +1.

Close Combat + Athletics Rank

4 Power Strike: *By skipping one round, getting the perfect angle of attack, the damage of the next close combat attack in the coming round is increased by +2.*

5 Disarm: *This attack does no damage but aims at disarming an enemy. The attack imposes a -1 modifier. If the attack is successful the adversary drops the weapon and it ends up about five meters away. If the attack scores three or more successes the attacker can grab the weapon for himself.*

6 Defensive Stance: *This adds +1 to the defense but all attacks made while in the defensive stance suffer a -1 modifier.*

7 Discombobulate: *By hitting specific sensitive areas it is possible to discombobulate an enemy. The attack imposes a -2 modifier and only do half the damage but if successful the enemy is counted as Dazed (see Health Chapter).*

8 Ki-focus: *This allows the martial artist to ignore pain. A Cool + Martial arts roll is made and each success allows the martial artist to ignore a round's worth of pain modifiers and daze. While this roll is made the martial artist cannot make any attacks or go into full defense.*

9 Rapid Strikes: *The martial artist can now perform two close combat attacks per round within any penalties. Bare hands or light melee weapons can be used for this.*

10 Deadly Strike: *Though this attack imposes a -3 modifier, the damage dealt by unarmed attacks is considered fatal.*

MEDITATION

Prerequisite: *Focus 2*

Skill: *Focus*

There are many different methods of Meditation, but they all result in inner peace and a focusing of the mind. A meditation session takes about an hour and grants a +1 to any skill (that the character already is privy to) during a twenty-four hour period. This bonus is only applicable to one Skill at a time. If the character chooses, he can instead

regain two psyche points; this too is only possible once per twenty-four hours, and is impossible to do if the character has a Worried, or lower, mentality. A third option (not possible if the character suffers from Night Terrors) is to meditate for four hours to replace a good night's sleep. When meditating, the person is oblivious to the outside world and must make an -2 Attention test if he wishes to snap out of it prematurely. Only extremely high noises, direct touch, injury or strong sensations can snap him out of it without a test. To meditate the player rolls Cool + Focus.

PARKOUR

Prerequisite: *Athletics 2*

Skill: *Athletics*

With Parkour you gain the ability to traverse the urban terrain with extreme proficiency. You are granted a number of benefits. You are able move a lot quicker through dense urban terrain and roof tops. And if you have the room and angle to roll you can jump from a second story window without being harmed or even slowed down. You climb faster and can overall move in incredible ways. Chasing someone in an urban environment that possess parkour is done with a -3 modifier. At times it will impossible (mentally or physically) to even follow them. Some are unwilling to try and jump a seven meter gap from the ninth story down to the seventh story rooftop even if they might make it. Parkour is not just a physical discipline, it is a state of mind.

PATHOLOGY

Prerequisite: *Medicine 2 or Forensics 3*

Skill: *Medicine or Forensics*

You have the knowledge needed to perform autopsies. You're capable of determining the cause of death and determining whether it's natural or not. You can put your findings in a legal context and identify the factors involved in cases where the cause of death has been deemed ambiguous. You're capable of running toxicological and viral screenings, but your findings often need to be investigated by an expert in the field in question (Virology, Drugs & Poisons, etc.)

- *Determine if a death is the cause result of malpractice.*
- *Bring out subdermal bruises and contusions using a UV camera.*
- *Run dental comparisons.*
- *Make a (snapshot) preliminary exam of the victim on the scene.*
- *Identifying and compare marks, lacerations and similar wounds.*
- *Finding and ascertain the killing blow, stab wound or shot when a body is badly torn up.*

PILOTING

Prerequisite: *Vehicle 2*

Skill: *Vehicle*

With this training you are able to fly air vehicles. The storyteller has to determine if it grants the ability to fly both helicopters and airplanes. It is recommended that utilizing the full capabilities of military aircrafts is a special type of training reserved for characters with a military background.

PROFILING

Prerequisite: *Psychology 2 and Academics 1*

Skill: *Psychology*

With this you are able to profile criminals and other individuals to determine their behavior. When profiling a serial killer, at least two murders have to have been committed by the subject and the investigator needs access to all the case material and the murder book (or a -3 modifier applies). The difficulty depends on the modus operandi and the complexity of a killer's mind. Profiling isn't an exact science and takes a lot of time. When the profiler is completely done it is possible to predict, to some degree, the next move of the killer, what drives him and maybe how to lure him out. As stated, it isn't an exact science as human nature can be erratic.

It is also possible to do a "snapshot" profile. By just looking at a corpse, and what state it is in, a profiler may determine some basic aspects of a killer psyche. The player of a character who is skilled at profiling should be allowed to read the file concerning serial killers.

PSYCHIC ABILITIES

Prerequisite: *Focus 3*

Skill: *See Gifted Chapter*

This is not a training as such but something a person is either born with, gains as a result of a traumatic event or is given through a result of experimentation. See the Gifted Chapter for more information.

RITUALS

Prerequisite: *Occult 2, Focus 2*

Skill: *See Gifted Chapter*

You are trained in one of the established occult traditions. Not only that, you have true faith and the ability to tap into powers most don't even believe exist in order to change reality. See the Gifted Chapter for more information.

SAFE CRACKING

Prerequisite: *Security 2 and Repair 1*

Skill: *Security*

This training allows you to get into safes. Your skill ranges from listening your way into simple home safes to bypassing the alarms of bank vaults and using a mounted



diamond drill to open high-end bank vaults. Small home vaults can be breached in seconds or minutes, more advanced version might need several minutes and some high-end tools such as drills and fiber optics. Vaults will require a whole host of expensive tools and can take hours to breach.

SCUBA DIVING

Prerequisite: Athletics 1

Skill: *Athletics*

You know how to use diving gear safely and how to navigate under water. You can mix your own air, conduct dives safely and have insight into different types of equipment. Your training allows you to add your Athletics rating to rolls involving holding your breath and you can hold your breath for Brawn x 20 seconds instead of Brawn x 10 before you even need to make a roll.

SLIGHT OF HAND

Prerequisite: Athletics 2

Skill: *Athletics*

Sleight of Hand can be used to perform small tricks, like making coins disappear, or it can be exploited to pick people's pockets. The difficulty for picking pockets depends on the circumstances. A distracted mark is easier to hit than a focused and alert one. If picking the pocket of another character the players make a contested test. The pick pocket rolls Quickness + Athletics while the character being pick pocketed rolls Attention + Search. Modifiers can be applied to either side depending on circumstances.

SNIPING

Prerequisite: *Shooting 2, Search 1, Focus 1*

Skill: *Shooting*

With this training you are able to make shoots from very long ranges using high-powered sniper rifles. You can adjust for the wind, gravity and the movement of your targets. You are a professional marksman. You have in-depth knowledge of sniper equipment, tactics and mental training techniques. If someone without this training tries to shoot at a target that is 100-150 meters away they will suffer a -3 difficulty (no matter the range of the weapon). Hitting beyond this range is near impossible if not a trained marksman.

THEOLOGY

Prerequisite: Academics 2

Skill: *Academics*

Theology includes the teachings of the most common religions. You are privy to the workings of Islam, Christianity, Judaism and all their different forms. Your knowledge is vast and you are quite familiar with most of the holy scriptures of these religions. If a storyteller wishes, he may divide the different religions into subgroups.

TRADECRAFT

Prerequisite: *Cryptography 1, Stealth 1 and Security 1*

Skill: *Cryptography, Stealth or Security depending on the situation.*

Tradecraft is a training used by members of the intelligence community. It involves covert methods and skill-sets which will allow you to survive as an agent.

- *Perform dead-drops.*
- *Identified another agents training by studying his methods.*
- *Recall specific covert operations.*
- *Setting up a false flag operation or identify an operation as such.*
- *Contact deep cover agents without making them go into hiding.*
- *Use code in speech to convey information without notifying eavesdroppers.*
- *Setting up agent handler protocols.*
- *Know the routines, methods and tactics of different covert agencies.*

Report Subject: Criminal Investigations
Date: 09/23/04
Agent: Shelly DeFazio

As requested I have compiled a short summary of crime scene investigation to further the education of new agents hired from the military. I hope this report will be helpful and hopefully added to the educational literature given to new agents joining Branch 94. As of yet it is not entirely complete but you will be able to form an opinion of the topics involved. The information in this file should be enough to introduce those not used to criminal investigations to the art of handling a crime scene. As stated, the file is not complete but it will show what kind of material I will present in the full document.

Criminal investigations, as we know, can vary in their outcome and investigative technique, but the information I provide in this report will be helpful none the less since it deals with general methods that may be employed in most cases.

Note: I will refer to suspects and offenders as male. This is done to save space and also it's a fact that most violent offenders are male.

Homicides: Most Common Methods

Most murders are not that innovative as they are often crimes of passions. There are four common ways that are the statistical norm when it comes to methods and implements used.

Stabbings/Lacerations

Knives and other sharp objects are common tools used in violent crimes as they're easy to come by and can be seen in our surroundings. If the murder weapon isn't present at the scene, the wound patterns on the victim often reveal the shape and size of the implements used. In some cases it's even possible to do a moulage casting of the wound to get an impression, thus rendering a model of the shape of the weapon.

By studying blood spatter and direction of the wounds it's often possible to determine the height of the killer; you can also get a fair idea of the chain of events. Always look for defensive wounds, number of stabs/lacerations and study the pattern of the wounds. One single deep stab to the heart often indicates intent and that the killer knew what he was doing. Multiple and sloppy stabs may indicate hesitation, lack of strength or an uncertainty. Excessive and violent stabbings speak of a certain state of mind. These kinds of stabbings are often the result of anger or a pathological mental instability (sometimes both).

When collecting blood evidence at these scenes, never assume that all the blood belongs to the victim. Murderers using knives often cut themselves accidentally in the process. Be careful when collecting blood and take several samples.

Shootings

Shootings are common and firearms often leave vital clues behind. Always look for powder burns on the victim to determine if the shot was fired at a close range. Also, firearms leave behind a vital clue most of the time: the bullet.

If the bullet isn't fragmented it will easily be identified by ballistics and can in many cases be connected to other crimes by identification of the striations of the slugs surface. Patterns and accuracy of the shots may also reveal the proficiency of the shooter and indirectly give leads to intent. Many killers leave behind bullet casings as well, which may help to identify the weapon. The hammer of a firearm leaves distinctive and unique marks on the casing, which may help with the identification of a gun if one is found.

Poisoning

This is a fairly uncommon method used in homicides. However, when it's used it tells of intent. Sometimes a killer was only going to make the victim sick, not understanding the full strength of the substance used. At other times the substance was meant to kill. Either way, those who poison tend to plan ahead, and these crimes are seldom "spur of the moment" killings due to the preparations needed to stage them.

Blunt Force Trauma

The use of blunt force trauma is very common since everyday objects (and bare hands) can be used to kill a human being. When objects are used they often leave an impression that may be compared to tools and other objects, thus identifying the object used. When someone uses their fists, they often have sores and scrapes on their knuckles, sometimes leaving DNA on the victim, as well as the other way around.

Strangulation/Suffocation/Drowning

These are also common methods used since bare hands and everyday objects can be employed. When someone has been suffocated the object used may leave fibers in the airways, indicating what object was used.

Strangulation usually leaves bruising on the victim, burn marks if ropes and other things have been used. The patterns of these may give an indication of the object put into practice. In the case of drowning you should always test the fluid in the lungs in order to ascertain the source, even if it seems obvious.

When bare hands have been used, the thumbs often apply pressure to the throat, leaving the hyoid bone severely damaged, giving some idea of the strength of the attacker.

The Body

Every good investigator knows that the victim's body speaks its own language. In what condition the body is found gives a wealth of information. In many cases, the killer is someone close to the victim, and even if he's not (as with serial killings) it's incredibly important to identify the victim.

Often a body is found fully clothed with identification on it (or found in the home). Even though it's "obvious" that a person is the one shown on the ID, dental records, DNA, and fingerprinting should be done to ascertain the identification. Problems can arise if great pains to conceal the identity of the victim have been taken. Below, a list of methods for identification has been compiled.

Teeth: If the teeth are intact it's possible to run X-rays through the dental records to get a match.

Fingerprints: Prints can be run through a number of databases ranging from police criminal record databases to the military and other personnel databases. Keep in mind that not all prints can be found on record.

Markings and Biological Anomalies: Tattoos are a good way of getting an ID by tracking them down. Surgical scars, birthmarks and different medical conditions are also vital leads. People with titanium bone fixture implants may be traced to certain hospitals by identifying the serial number on the implants, as may most with silicon implants. Unusual medical conditions and medical prescriptions are also pointers.

DNA: As with fingerprints, DNA can be run through databases but many people aren't registered.

Evidence on the Body

There are a number of things you should take into consideration when examining a body, both on the scene and in the coroner's office. Has the body been moved and in that case why, and from where? Maybe the victim was still alive during the relocation? Time of death, transfer and many other things are important to the case.

Transfer: When a person comes within two meters of another there is the possibility of transfer. Saliva, hair, skin cells, blood spatter, fibers, and, if physical contact is made, prints can be transferred.

If a victim scratched or bit his assailant he might have his DNA in his mouth or under his nails. Male sexual offenders are often secretors, leaving both semen and saliva on their victims. Remember that transfer goes both ways, finding traces of the victim on a suspect can be just as incriminating.

Moving of Bodies: In several cases the body has been moved. Sometimes just dragged a short distance, or staged in a certain manner. In other cases the body has been dumped far from the scene of the murder.

It's possible to determine if the victim was alive or not during the relocation, providing some criteria have been met. If a body has been dragged and has no shoes on, the feet (often the heels) display extensive scraping. If there is any bleeding it would mean that the victim was alive, since dead people don't bleed. Post mortem wounds and marks may also help to determine how the body was moved. Soil, seeds, paint and a wide range of assortments of transfer from the surroundings may help track down the original crime scene.

Injuries and Wounds: The victim may have been inflicted with injuries, both post and pre mortem, that weren't fatal. Often this is the result of a struggle (as defensive wounds). In some instances the wounds have been inflicted as a statement, message or telltale of state of mind.

Burns, mutilation and other similar injuries caused pre mortem are, in most cases, signs of torture or ritualistic compulsive behavior. If only one instance is reported it may involve (depending on the victim) retribution in the criminal community or some other form of personal revenge as the victim was made to suffer. If multiple victims are found (some days, weeks, months or even years apart) that bear the same types of injuries, it may be the indication of a serial offender/killer.

Analysis: Analysis of transfer found on the scene and on the body is vital. Finding substances at a scene or on a victim may lead to the suspect or the actual scene of the murder if the body has been dumped elsewhere. Tracing unique chemical compounds, soil samples or other substances may further the investigation. Be sure not to get lost in this stage, focusing only on this. A broad perspective is always needed to solve a case.

Note on DNA: If the DNA of the killer is found you should always compare the DNA with the victim. People who aren't related usually don't have more than 6 or 7 DNA markers in common, if the killer's DNA shares more (12 to 17 or so is common for close relatives) markers with the victim it's very likely you're looking for a close relative. After all, statistics show that approximately 84% of all murder victims know or are related by blood to their killers.

A Note on Cause of Death

Even when cause of death seems obvious, never take it for granted. For example, a body is found, the capillaries are ruptured, there is severe bruising on the hyoid bone and a rope is found around the neck. It would seem as though the victim was strangled. But what if the strangulation was only a method of torture, never killing the victim and the actual cause of death was poisoning? Never assume too much, but you shouldn't jump the wildest theory either; just keep it in the back of your mind.

Suicides should always be scrutinized. If a person has been found in his tub with his wrists slit and a razor blade beside him it appears as suicide. But then, if there are no hesitation marks around the wounds and the wounds done with the damaged off hand is straight and deep, there is a big chance that someone murdered the individual. The same goes if a woman allegedly has killed

herself in a particularly messy way. Usually, women tend to use a method that leaves behind a "clean" scene. If a female has used a shotgun to shoot herself in the mouth it is very likely that it was murder. However, this is not always the case. Women are capable of taking their lives in an uncharacteristically messy way, especially if they suffer from a mental illness.

Scene of The Murder

The scene may reveal a lot about a murder. Everything from blood spatter to transference may help to reconstruct the chain of events. It's also important to determine if it is a murder scene or a dumping site.

Geography: If a victim is found in his home and there is no sign of forced entry, it is possible that the victim knew the killer, or the killer might have been skilled at lock picking. However, it could just be that the victim forgot to lock the door or left it open. In some instances the killer could have entered in the guise of a stranger the victim trusted. Using a uniform or other pretense is common, especially for serial killers.

If a murder has taken place in an empty construction site or other remote and generally abandoned area, it indicates that the killer had picked out this particular spot to commit the murder. If a victim has been dumped in an area or locale the place itself seldom has any real connection to the killer or the actual murder.

Reconstruction: Learn to study the scene. Broken objects, spatter, footprints and other things will actually speak to you and let you tell the story. Visualize how killer and victim fought, reconstruct different scenarios in your mind and aided by the evidence you might come up with an accurate scenario. This is important as it helps you understand some of the psychology behind the event as a whole.

Witnesses: Always talk to as many witnesses as you can and take notes. Witnesses will often help your investigation but witnesses may be unreliable. Some might just be hostile but others can be overeager to help and may inadvertently fabricate memories to fill out the blanks. Similar testimonies from witnesses without any prior relationships often prove accurate.

END OF REPORT

Report Subject: Profiling

Date: 02/13/05

Agent: Shelly DeFazio

I hope you got the end of my previous report regarding criminal investigations. I have now started to collect information concerning the profiling of serial killers. Agents we recruit from BAU at Quantico won't need this information but those only used to actual crime scene investigation and those from the military will find this invaluable. As before I will refer to the killer as male because of statistics.

This is just notes so far but within two months I will have the full report on your desk.

Who are they?

There is actually no real standard on how to classify a serial killer but there are some points you can use as guidance, changing the information as you go deeper into the profiling. Use these markers as a starting point but always know that killers have different agendas and personalities, which may put them outside these points to a varying degree. The fourteen points below have been derived using FBI's standards when profiling.

- 1) Usually male.
- 2) Age range from 20 to 35.
- 3) Caucasian in most cases.
- 4) Suffer from low self-esteem.
- 5) Have a low success rate at holding down jobs.
- 6) They have no "real" motives for the murders.
- 7) Victims often share some similarities.
- 8) The killer leaves a signature behind.
- 9) They often have a "quiet time" or cool down period with a halt in activities.
- 10) The killer evolves, becoming more adept at killing.
- 11) The murders are often motivated by something sexual (urges, dysfunctions etc.)
- 12) Collect trophies from the scene in order to relive the crime.
- 13) Continue until stopped.
- 14) Rarely feel any guilt over what they have done.

Modus Operandi (MO)

This is Latin and basically means "mode of operation". When using the term MO or modus operandi when dealing with serial killers it points to their pattern of behavior. All serial killers have an MO, a pattern they seldom stray from. Most often the MO consist of a type of victim or method for dispatching their victim. Leaving different signatures is also part of the MO.

The reason behind the MO often differs greatly. Some who have fixated on a particular type of woman might symbolically kill their mother or wife over and over again. At other times they look for a weakness in their victim, which makes it easier for them to control them. Those who target prostitutes often have many failed sexual experiences in their background. A combination of factors often enters into it. A promiscuous and abusive mother, followed by erectile dysfunction later in life, has been known to push several unstable individuals to the limit, in the end making them into human predators.

Typical Profiles

There are two types of primary profiles one can use to classify a killer. When the general classification has been made a profiler needs to go deeper, attaching a subclass profile as well.

Organized

Most serial killers are in fact psychopaths or suffer from a severe mental illness (psychopaths are sane and the disorder is one of personality). Psychopaths and disturbed individuals seldom have any impulse control but the organized killers manage to keep their urges under wraps, which makes them very capable of planning and organizing each killing.

Organized killers often have a steady job (making them differ from the fourteen-point list from the start) and may even have a family. They seem very normal and this façade makes them hard to track down and catch. Their job and financial situation give them access to a car, which makes the transportation of victims easier.

They are often driven by sexual sadism (depending on subclass) and control. Torture, abuse, degradation and murder are their way of expressing this need. They seldom suffer from a mental disorder but will certainly be psychopaths or have a very strong psychopathic personality. They plan meticulously, preparing every detail, and often have knowledge of police procedure and watch the news to get updates regarding their "work". Most organized serial killers are slightly more intelligent than average, usually having an IQ of 110. Ted Bundy for example had an IQ of between 120 and 129. The average person falls within the range of 95 to 100.

Disorganized

Disorganized killers usually suffer from a mental illness and if they're psychopaths they lack all impulse control. They seldom plan the killings and murder on a whim or impulse. Most have no interest in the media or even have the mental awareness to cover their tracks.

Disorganized killers are of average or below average intelligence and seldom have a job or any form of higher education (it has been proven that many are high school dropouts). Their lack of impulse control, ability to plan ahead and lack of precautionary traits make them much easier to catch.

Subclasses

The two primary types of serial killers may fall into any of these subclasses. These are different types of killers and the exact motives differ from one subclass to another.

Visionary Killers

These killers are convinced that they receive orders and messages from a higher power (often disorganized killers since mental disorders are evident) telling them what to do. The voices they hear may be believed to be those of angels, demons or other beings (David Berkowitz a.k.a. Son of Sam claimed that his neighbor's dog, Harvey, was possessed by an ancient demon which commanded him at times, but later he stated that this was a fabrication. No one really knows if this was a mental illness or an outright lie).

How they kill differs but usually they have one method of choice, may it be stabbings, strangulation or shootings. In some cases they connect their killings to some kind of occult tradition or belief.

Hate Killers

Hate killers believe they're doing society a favor. They always target a specific type of individual. These are blamed for all the bad things that happen in one way or another. Prostitutes, immigrants, homosexuals, senior citizens and invalids are common targets. They always focus on one of these groups but a hate killer's motives may be as petty as the types of clothes someone wears. The activity of these killers often escalate rather quickly.

Lust Killers

Lust killers only kill because they derive pleasure from it. They take satisfaction in the suffering and agony of others and the victims are put through gruesome torture and degradation before they're killed. Most killers have a style of torture that they perform, seldom changing the pattern. Victims are often positioned (after being dumped) in a specific manner. This kind of killer thirsts for control and to have someone's life in their hands gives them a kick. They may keep their victims for days as prisoners.

Sexual Sadists

This subclass is similar to the lust killer as they kill because they derive pleasure from it but their urges extend beyond plain torture, they're also heavily motivated by sexual needs. They combine torture and death with sex. They always sexually abuse their victims in the most painful way and the combination of the victim's fear and pain and the killer's own sexual release is the only thing that may give them peace of mind. They have to degrade the victim and break them down in spirit.

Solitude Killers

These killers are the opposite of the hate killer to a certain degree. Instead of doing society a "favor" they take out their rage on it. Everything that has gone wrong in the life of the killer is blamed on a certain group of people and by killing these individuals they believe their own lives will improve. Some don't believe this and just kill to quench their thirst for revenge. Their victims are usually those who have succeeded where the killer has failed, rich people, highly educated or others who have some form of advantage (as the killer sees it) they don't deserve.

Addendum: Only a small percentage of the population can be classified as psychopaths, but many everyday people have a psychopathic personality. Most psychopaths don't resort to murder or even violence but are usually very skilled conmen. It has been widely documented that many CEO's and people in similar positions are psychopaths or display a psychopathic personality. This may actually be the reason for their success.

Request: I have viewed a crime statistical report when I visited Quantico and it appears that 85% of the world's serial killers hail from the USA. At any given time there are 20-50 active serial killers in this country. However, this is an optimistic figure that has been derived using information we can verify for certain; the actual number may be much worse and it's my professional opinion that it is. When I have closed the book on my ongoing investigation I would like to have the opportunity to investigate the growing rate of serial killers in order to see if I can find a pattern and a reason.

As this agency investigates some of the more hidden motives and events in the world I feel that the increase of serial killers should be dealt with. Many have a tendency to make obscure references to the occult. The odd thing is that these references are made out of the blue. Even killers who have shown no interest in the supernatural have been known to have deep knowledge about many esoteric subjects.

END OF REPORT

ACTIONS THAT NEEDS DETAILING

Some of these actions are investigative in nature and most can be utilized using the Key Investigative Scene system. There are many other types of actions than those described here but they should provide a good basis on which to base other types of rolls and situations. Use the examples in the Reduction Time Table to come up with your own actions.

ANAGRAMS & CIPHERS

Creating or cracking ciphers and anagrams often requires a bit of time. How much time depends on how advanced and vast the problem is. Ciphers and codes are cracked using Brains + Cryptography while anagrams are solved using Brains + Academics. Modifiers can be applied as a result of missing pieces of code (which would produce a negative modifier) while using specific deciphering programs and collected clues to the code may give a positive modifier. Some ciphers require a computer in order to be solved and keep in mind that some ciphers and anagrams requires a key before they can be cracked. The Magnitude can range from 1 to 6 and at times, if a code is extremely advanced and vast multiple reduction time instances can be employed.

ATHLETICS & CHASES

Foot chases and other athletic actions that are competitive in nature are resolved rather easily using extended contested tests. Set a number of successes that has to be accumulated by the participants and roll fitting Aptitude + Athletics. The Aptitudes usually employed are Quickness (for running) and Brawn (for such things as a tug of war or swimming).

When it comes to foot chases, swimming and climbing the Movement is added to the result of the roll. Whomever accumulates the decided amount of successes within the decided number of rolls first has won the chase (caught up or gotten away). Two or three rolls is the standard. These rolls are made each round. And if the one being chased tips over trashcans and stuff in his wake the pursuer can suffer a negative modifier. This very same system can be applied to vehicle chases but during these the vehicle attributes are added (see the Vehicle description in the Equipment Chapter).

***Example:** The anthropology student Mark runs into a sledgehammer toting cannibalistic psychotic during his investigation of a supposed haunted house. Mark decides that hauling ass is his best option. The storyteller says that whomever manages to accumulate the most successes within 2 rolls will win. The chase is on. Mark has a Quickness of 3 and an Athletics score of 3, he is very agile as he got a full ride on an athletic scholarship. His movement is +2. He rolls his total pool of 6, scoring 3 successes and when his Movement rate of +2 is added he accumulates a total of 5 successes! Now it is the cannibal's turn. But he only scores 1 success and also*

has movement of +1 so now he has a total of 2 successes. Now it is the second and final roll of the chase. Mark scores 3 more successes in total, resulting in an accumulated 8 success. The cannibal only racks up a total of 5 successes. Mark shoots out of the house like a bat out of hell, scaling a table and jumping out of a broken window. The whole chase only took two rounds, six seconds in the game world. Mark only hopes that there aren't more madmen about and that they don't know where he lives...

BREAKING & ENTERING

There are many different locks, doors and alarms. They range from simple padlocks and simple storage lockers to multi-layered vault doors. Simple locks have a magnitude of 1 while the more advanced have a magnitude of 4. Extreme cases may call for a magnitude of 5, such as a high-grade bank or military vaults are examples of such cases. Picking a lock requires a Quickness + Security roll while breaching high grade safes require a Attention + Security roll and the Safe Cracker Training. If a door is locked and has an alarm it might be necessary to make two rolls. One for the actual lock and one to circumvent the alarm, alarms are circumvented by making a Attention + Security roll.

Failing to circumvent an alarm will not always set it off, rather the character realizes that he has made a mistake and that any further tampering will set it off. He is allowed to try again but the Do-Over rule applies. More advanced alarms are more likely to go off if someone fails to circumvent it.

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

Crime scene investigations come in many shapes and sizes. On site the investigators make use of the Investigation Skill (the Forensic skill if appropriate). There are many things that can be discovered on a crime scene depending on the circumstances. Everything from fingerprints, fibers, blood to actual bodies. And often evidence is quite obvious and it is more about interpreting the finds. Blood spatter might indicate type of weapon used, distance and give a good indication of the chain of events, even if the body is missing. Stippling left behind as a result of the discharge of a firearm can also tell parts of a story. The skill Investigation is also used to give orders to other investigators and officers. It is employed to determine how wide an area around a crime scene officers should go door to door and look for witnesses. It also enables someone to secure a perimeter and bag and tag pieces of evidence.

The skill Forensics comes in use when analyzing actual evidence and can also be used to perform more accurate and detailed stippling and blood spatter analysis. It (and the skill Medicine) can be employed to determine approximate time of death during most circumstances as well as determining the time of death more accurately using a probe to measure the liver temperature. Performing actual autopsies of crime victims require the Pathology

Training. Performing medical autopsies, examining the cause of death in cases of illnesses, accidents or medical malpractice, can be done without the Pathology Training.

Negative modifiers can apply for a number of reasons. Not having the correct equipment, or if the crime scene has been washed out by rain, been contaminated or if someone with insight into forensics and investigative procedures have actively cleaned up the scene or rearranged it, will impose negative modifiers. The Magnitude is decided by the storyteller and is in most cases determined by the size and complexity of the crime scene. When all the evidence has been collected the skill Forensics is used to analyze the findings in an actual lab. Ballistics, fingerprint analysis and all manner of tests can be done to interpret the collected evidence. Photo & Film is used to take pictures of the actual crime scene and these images are important to the investigators as it will allow them to get an overview of the scene long after it has been cleaned up.

STEALTH

Sometimes the characters need to hide, sneak up on someone, or tail a suspect. At other times they are themselves the target of stealthy enemies. There are basically two ways to handle this. The more detailed method is as following: If a person actively tries to spot a tail, a sneaky enemy or someone in hiding he rolls his Attention + Search versus the person's Quickness + Stealth or their Attention + Stealth if the individual is hiding from the character or tailing him. If someone is unaware of the fact that they can discover someone that is using Stealth the storyteller simply makes an Attention roll for the character versus the same values as mentioned above. It is a simple contested test.

The second method uses a so called Stealth and Discovery Modifier. This is a much faster system. This is only applied to NPCs. When a character tries to use Stealth against an individual or creature, or try to discover one that is using Stealth, the modifier is applied to the roll. The modifier represents the creature's ability to stay hidden or to discover people that are hiding. This simple method is very effective when dealing with multiple characters and NPCs as it keeps the dice rolling to a minimum. Use the table below to calculate the Stealth/Discovery Modifier of an NPC.

Appropriate Aptitude + Stealth	Stealth Modifier
1-2	0
3-4	-1
5-6	-2
7-8	-3
9-10	-4
11 and beyond	-5

Note: Count the rating as one higher for Inhuman Aptitudes, two for Massive and three for Extreme. The maximum is still -5. So if a creature would have a Stealth Modifier of -2, but one of his Aptitude was marked as Massive, it would end up as -4. See the Minions Chapter for more information concerning Inhuman, Massive and Extreme Aptitudes.

Example: Mark soon discovered that there were more lunatics in the area. He has stumbled into an old junkyard and he sees two hulking men in tattered clothes carrying axes. In order to get to where he is going he has to sneak pass them. Wanting the scene not to drag out, the storyteller decides to use the Stealth/Discovery Modifier system. The cannibals are actively searching for mark and so they are using their Attention + Search. One has a total value of 3 and another has 5. The storyteller only needs to bother with the one with the highest value. If Mark manages to beat him the one with the lower value will not be able to discover him either. Mark has a Quickness + Stealth score of 4, but he gets a -2 as the cannibal's Discovery Modifier is -2. This gives Mark's player 2Ds to roll. The player rolls the dice, but fails. The cannibals discover him and sets after him, hungry for flesh.

Example 2: Mark managed to get away and make it to the forest path that leads back to his car. But what he doesn't know is that a cannibal hides behind a tree on the path, looking to ambush him. The cannibal is hiding so in order to calculate his Stealth Modifier the storyteller adds together his Attention + Stealth, which adds up to 4. This gives him a Stealth Modifier of -1. Mark is not actively searching for threats as he jogs towards the car, wanting to get away as soon as possible. So the storyteller makes a hidden Attention roll for Mark. Mark has a total rank of 6 for the roll, but the cannibal's Stealth Modifier is -1 which brings the score down to 5. The storyteller rolls for the player and the roll is a success. The storyteller tells the player that he sees a glimmer on the edge of a tree trunk and is able to discern that someone is crouching down with a blade in hand, waiting for him. The player decides that it is time for Mark to turn the table on these bastards so he wants to sneak up on the cannibal. Time for the player to roll for Quickness + Stealth. The storyteller calculates the cannibal's Discovery Modifier...

Attention + Search (active) or Attention x 2 (passive)	Discovery Modifier
1-2	0
3-4	-1
5-6	-2
7-8	-3
9-10	-4
11 and beyond	-5

GETTING SOCIAL

This is a very broad area but here it has been compressed into a few simple systems you can use to resolve most social situations. In general it is a contested test. The one trying to do the convincing rolls Clout + Fast Talk or Rhetoric (whichever is appropriate) versus the target's Brains + Fast Talk or Rhetoric (whichever the deceiver is using). Modifiers can be applied depending on the quality and believability of the lie and the circumstances. Props such as fake IDs, appropriate disguises or name dropping might make it harder for the one being deceived to spot the deception. While obvious deception and outrageous claims will make it quite easy to spot the deception. At other times it is not about just lying, Rhetoric is often used to placate and reassure. In debates or while arguing in court both sides roll Clout + Rhetoric in an extended contested test.

INTIMIDATION

Intimidation is basically a contested roll. The intimidator makes the appropriate roll (a Skill or Aptitude roll, depending on the situation). The one on the receiving end makes the same roll, only substituting whatever Aptitude is involved with Cool. Intimidation is often about leverage, and in some situations it's impossible to use certain types of intimidation. Threatening a gang of street thugs that you can kill them would be quite impossible if you are a lone pensile neck administrator, while two Special Forces soldiers with their emblems showing would stand a very good chance of succeeding with such an intimidation. If the threatening party wins, he has successfully intimidated the victim. Very good leverage can give a +1 to +3 modifier to the roll, while bad leverage gives negative modifiers.

- *Slamming someone up against the wall in order to get some information: Brawn + Close Combat.*
- *Threatening with legal procedures: Clout + Law*
- *Discouraging an aggressor by showing some fancy moves (flipping a knife or gun with precision): Quickness + Close Combat/Shooting*
- *Talking someone out of using their gun in the cockpit by explaining (in every sickening detail) how it would feel to die of explosive decompression: Clout + Medicine.*

LIFTING AND BREAKING STUFF

The scale below shows how much a person can break/dead lift, according to his strength. No roll is required to manage it as long as the Brawn score matches the feat. If a character wishes to lift/break stuff that's above his Brawn rating on the chart, he must pass a Brawn roll with a -1 penalty for every level above his own capacity he tries to lift. A human can manage to lift 2 scores higher than his Brawn normally allows. Remember, even if a person can do something physically, it doesn't mean that it won't hurt them. Punching through sheetrock will break your hand, while ripping metal will require armored gloves, but it can be done.

BRAWN POWER CHART

1: Break a small and poorly constructed wooden box/ 40 kilos

2: Bust a wooden chair/ 60 kilos

3: Kick down a hinged apartment door/ 100 kilos

4: Punch through fifteen centimeters of compact sheet rock/ 150 kilos

5: Rip a radiator off the wall/ 200 kilos

6: Bend a four centimeter thick iron rod/ 250 kilos

7: Break down a security door/ 300 kilos

8: Rip open a sheet of metal/ 400 kilos

+1/ + 100 kilos

PROFILING

Handling profiling with pure rolls is near impossible and will rip away any sense of immersion. Rather the system should be used to measure how much information a profiler can extract from each murder, crime scene, interview or case file he examines. And keep in mind that profiling is not an exact science and it is seldom a profile is one hundred percent accurate. But every time a chance to uncover something else about the killer presents itself (something changed in the modus operandi, learning that the killer is not a loner as suspected or discovering a new pattern out of the blue by going over the case evidence again) the profiler should get to roll again and get the chance to learn something new about the unsub.

Many times, like when a character wants to make a snapshot profile of the scene of a simple unsub, or make a snapshot profile of someone they are talking to, only one quick roll is required.

When the characters are hunting down a serial killer the storyteller needs to come up with a profile. He then also needs to decide what each success on a profiling roll might reveal and how many successes that are necessary to get a complete overview. Each time the player gets a chance to roll you should employ the same philosophy used in key investigative scenes if the profiling is important. They will always succeed in getting some information whether they succeed or not, but the more successes they generate the more information they will accumulate. If they manage to generate many successes during the first murder scene and the early interviews they might manage to create a near complete profile early on. A low number of successes means that they need more material (sadly this often means additional murders) to work with in order to continue generating the profile.

REPAIRS & CRAFTING

There are basically three types of ways to use this system: to make repairs, to make modifications/improvements or to build something from scratch. Actually creating blueprints or engineering schematics requires a Brains + Repairs roll while most actual repairs require a Quickness + Repair roll. Repairing or crafting items generally requires tools and resources. Some things can be jury rigged or fixed with improvised gear, while others requires much more. Making extensive modifications (increase of clip size or fire rate, etc.) to a firearm requires the right tools and parts, or raw material and advanced tools such as a milling cutter. Simple modifications might need very little (sawing off the barrel of a shotgun). What is possible, the exact magnitude and what is needed is up to the storyteller. Modifications often has to do with working conditions, tools and available materials.

RESEARCH

When researching a subject to learn new information using books, databases and other resources, the player makes a Brains + appropriate skill roll for his character. If he is researching medical cases, the skill Medicine would be appropriate. If he wants to learn more about theoretical cold fusion he would need to make a Brains + Science roll. Research usually has a magnitude ranging from 3 to 5.

SHOOTING THINGS TO PIECES

Objects such as wall panels, thick glass and similar things have an armor rating and durability, just like armor does. In order for an attack to be able to break them down, the attack must have the capacity to affect the material. A small antipersonnel weapon will not damage metals and security door while a carbine might. When the durability is depleted, the object (or the area of an object) will be broken down. There are billions of objects and materials, but instead of providing an exhaustive list we have created three types that you can adapt and use on the fly. Use your judgment when deciding what kinds of attacks might

damage the material types. See the Equipment Chapter for more information on Armor Value (AV) and Durability (DU).

Note: When the durability is depleted, it doesn't necessarily destroy the entire object. If a wall is destroyed when someone takes a sledge hammer to it, it probably means that an opening big enough for a person to slip through has been made and not that the entire inner wall has collapsed. If a hand grenade had caused the destruction, a much larger hole would probably been blown open.

Indoors housing material (walls, doors, car door, thick wood, furniture, etc.): AV 2-5/ DU 5-20

Outer housing material (concrete, thin metal sheets or brick): AV 4-10/ DU 15-25

Sturdy indoor materials (inner walls, tanker bulkheads, security doors): AV 10-20, DU 25-50

MAKE STUFF UP, GODDAMN IT!

The system of Noctum is very flexible and you can (and should) create your own rolls and rules whenever needed. Be sure to discuss these with the group as a whole so that everyone is on the same page with the new or modified rules.

For example, if you need to know if a character makes that 50 meter swim under water in order to avoid the gunfire you could have him make a Brawn + Focus roll with a -2 modifier for the stress, and decide he needs two successes in order to succeed holding his breath. Don't be afraid to expand the system. It's meant to be adapted and changed according to the needs of individual gaming groups.

REDUCTION TIME QUICK TABLE

Magnitude	Base Time	Red Time	Min Time
1	2 minutes	20 seconds	30 seconds
2	5 minutes	1 minute	1 minute
3	20 minutes	3 minutes	5 minutes
4	1 hour	10 minutes	30 minutes
5	6 hours	30 minutes	3 hours
6	12 hours	1 hour	6 hours

EXAMPLE OF A NEWLY CREATED CHARACTER



Surveillance Transcript

Division: Internal Affairs
Agent In Charge: Jane D'Agusta
Conversation Held By: Agent David Grass (DG) and unknown female (UF) subject.
Date: 10/13/07 (02:43 a.m)

DG initiated the call.

UF: Hello?

DG: It's me, where are you?

UF: You know I can't tell you that. Did you get it?

DG: Sure, but it wasn't easy. I know what you said, but...

UF: You know the deal. You can ask away but I'm not going to tell you why we need it.

DG: Why do you have to call her "IT"? She's a living person!
(Five-second pause)

DG: I'm not sure anymore. I have no idea what you want with her and it feels wrong pawning her off to you like this. She's my...

UF: Well, you do know what will happen if you don't bring it to us? You still have one left and I would hate to see you in mourning. Besides, I think we've been awfully generous; at least we let you pick which one to give us. Do we understand each other?

DG: Fuck you! You fucking bitch!

UF: Now, now. Screaming at me won't really change anything. As I said, you still have one left. So, I will ask you again. Do we understand each other?

DG: Yes, we understand each other!

UF: Come on David, you're screaming again. With your blood pressure you really need to relax.

DG: She's my daughter goddamnit! I'm giving you my daughter!

UF: Well, at least now she isn't in the detention centre anymore and you still have your favourite kid at home.

(Three seconds of static)

UF: Turn left now and get rid of your phone.

DG: What...

UF: Do it now!

END OF CONVERSATION

Addendum: We have not located agent Grass or his daughter but we are still searching. We found his car by the north side of Down Bridge; it is likely he was headed for Gatewood. We have not found any information on how he got his daughter out of the facility. I recommend that we widen the net and put his younger daughter and wife in protective custody for now.

Hey Liv, I stuck my neck out getting my hands on this document. You owe me BIG TIME! Don't call me again, I will call you.

CHAPTER 6

HEALTH

Transcribed from Olivia Lake's camcorder audio track

Olivia Lake: Watch out! Shoot it, goddamnit!

(Sound of automatic fire)

Lisa Huxley: Fucking move it! Get to the damn car!

(Screeching sounds, possibly distorted voices).

Victor Legard (Voice strained): They got me ... shit, I'm bleeding out!

(Sound of automatic fire)

Lisa Huxley: Get up! C'mon, get back on your feet!

Olivia Lake (Panting, likely running): Oh God, oh God.

(Sound of keys jingling)

Olivia Lake: C'mon, c'mon!

(Sound of car starting))

Olivia Lake: Get in!

(Sound of automatic fire)

From the journal of Olivia Lake

Victor survived, but those ... Shadows jacked him up good. And they had kept coming even when Huxley unloaded her Uzi into them. What the hell were they? Nothing could survive being riddled with bullets like that, let alone keep running.

If Huxley hadn't showed up, Victor and I would have been ripped to pieces. She shot at those things and basically dragged Victor to the car. She might be a coked-up psychopath but she saved our lives. We managed to get Victor to the hospital; I spun them some bullshit story about a dog attack. Don't care if they bought it.

As for me, at the moment I feel saner than I suppose I should. But the tape ... all messed up. Most footage of those creatures came out as static. I just managed to capture a few frames, but the audio seems to be mostly fine.

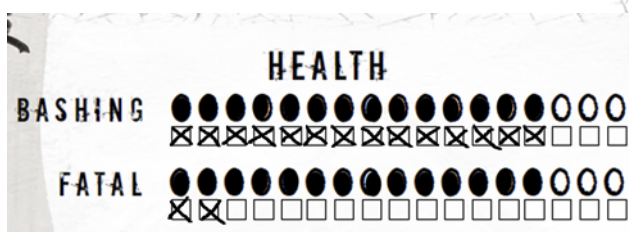
Those creatures seem to be more animalistic than anything else, and them showing up as Victor hunted down a lead seems awfully convenient. I'm convinced that something is controlling them; something with a twisted agenda.

It seems that it has gone from a fact-finding mission to one of pure survival. And right now I have no idea where to go from here.

The world is a violent and dangerous place; even more so for the characters since they have a tendency to get dragged into gunfights, bloody conspiracies and other volatile situations. Damage taken in Noctum is measured in hit points (HP). As hit points are depleted, the person suffering the injuries becomes gradually impaired. The system of dealing with damage isn't meant to simulate how injuries work in real life; rather it facilitates a tool that makes it possible to deal with damage in the game universe.

Bashing Damage: This constitutes non-fatal damage. In most cases such things as unarmed attacks cause bashing damage. Being hit by objects can also cause bashing damage at times. When a character has sustained enough bashing it's converted to *fatal damage*. This happens if bashing damage surpasses the wound level incapacitated.

Example: *When the bashing hit points are maxed out, Huxley sustains another 2 bashing damage points in a brawl. These are converted to fatal damage. Enough bashing will in the end seriously injure or kill her as it's now converted to fatal.*



Fatal Damage: Everything that can seriously harm a character in one attack/damage incident and (or) can cause more severe wounds that takes a long time to heal is classified as fatal damage. Being shot, cut by chainsaw or run over by a car are things that typically cause fatal damage.

DAMAGE POINTS?

At times the text says that someone can sustain a certain amount of damage opposed to losing hit points. Basically this is the same thing as losing hit points. If someone sustains 5 points worth of damage he has lost 5 hit points. It's just semantics.

AMOUNT OF HIT POINTS

All characters have 12 + Brawn in hit points. They have this amount of Bashing and Fatal hit points. Many other creatures have a vastly higher pool of hit points due to their unnatural nature.

INFLECTING DAMAGE

All attacks have a base damage, simply called Damage (DMG). This damage is inflicted upon a hit and is a static value attached to the weapon or form of attack. Each success rolled generates an additional point of damage. Let's say that an attack has a base damage of 4. If the attacker scores 2 successes the damage inflicted would be

6. He would get 4 for the base damage while each success generates 1 point worth of damage. There are some damage types (accidents, explosives etc) that work a bit differently but this is the norm when dealing with most direct attacks.

Example: *Jenny fires her handgun which has a base damage of 5 and scores 2 successes. Her target sustains 7 points worth of damage. He suffers 5 for the base damage and an additional 2 for the two successes.*

HIT POINTS AND WOUND LEVELS

When you lose Fatal hit points the character will become more and more affected due to pain, shock and bleeding. The less hit points you have left the worse off you will be. This means that those with a high Attribute score in Brawn will be able to sustain more damage before they are affected negatively. In order to keep track of the effects of injuries Noctum make use of six Wound Levels: *Nicked, Hurt, Injured, Badly Wounded, Critically Wounded* and *Mortally Injured*. The Wound Levels are determined by how many hit points the character has left. While hit points are the overall "structural integrity" of the character's body, the wound levels gives a way to gauge the effects on the body as hit points are lost. Bashing and Fatal hit points are measured on different, and for the most part, totally separate scales. Each wound level comes with its own negative modifier. *The wound level which gives the most negative modifier and hindrance is the one that counts, but they do not stack and are not cumulative.* When movement is halved the actual movement on the character sheet is halved (rounded down) as well as the number of meters a character can move during a round.

FATAL HIT POINT LOSS

You have lost some Hit Points but you have 11 or more left: Nicked, no ill effects

10 Hit Points left: Hurt, -1

6 Hit Points left: Injured, - 2 and Movement is halved

4 Hit Points left: Badly Wounded, -3 and you can only hobble about at walking speed. You lose 1 additional Hit Point every twenty minutes due to bleeding and shock.

2 Hit Points left: Critically Wounded -4, if you are conscious you can only get around by crawling or with the aid of someone.

0 to -5 Hit Points: Mortally Injured. You lose 1 hit point every minute and if you lose a negative value that surpasses your Brawn you are dead.

BASHING HIT POINT LOSS

Lost half: -1

4 or less left: -2

DAZED

If a character loses his Brawn + 3 amount of hit points (Fatal or Bashing) in one blow he is Dazed. While Dazed his movement is reduced to half and he suffers a -2 modifier to all actions. This lasts for 6 minus Brawn number of rounds.

HEALING

Bashing hit points heals at a rate of one hit point per hour, no matter what physical activities that is undertaken by the character. Fatal hit points takes a bit more of time and requires rest. These heal at a rate of 2 points per 24 hours when in an intensive care unit, 1 point per 24 hours if just resting (not undertaking strenuous physical activities). If not resting it takes 48 hours per point. Healing occurs from right to left on the character sheet.

CRITICAL HITS

An attack that subtracts 10 fatal hit points in one blow can instantly kill a character. When this happens the player has to make a Brawn roll (this roll is not a subject to the wound penalties). Each additional Hit Point above 10 that is lost in the same blow imposes a -1 to the roll. If the roll fails the character is dead or suffers a permanent injury depending on the leniency of the storyteller (scratch a dot from appropriate Attribute depending on the nature of the injury, this can be bought back with *Experience Points*). The storyteller can also decide that a critical hit causes



bleeding. A successful roll doesn't mean that the character is unaffected; he will be Dazed for 1D times 10 seconds. Shots (or adequate blunt force trauma) to the head that start out as Fatal and are converted to Bashing as a result of wearing *Hard Armor* (see equipment) will still count as a critical hit as the kinetic force of such a blow is enough to affect the brain.

If 10 bashing hit points is lost in one roll a failed roll just renders the character unconscious for ten minutes to an hour or so. But a bashing hit point loss of ten to the head counts as a critical hit.

Example: A murderous psychopath swings an axe at Huxley. He gets a very good result on his attack roll and the axe inflicts 12 Fatal hit points on her. The blade crushes the left clavicle and severs her trapezius muscle in a fountain of blood. This is a critical hit and can kill or cause a permanently handicapping injury. In order to avoid this she has to pass a Brawn roll (she has Brawn 3, giving her 6 dice to roll). As the damage is 12 she gets a -2 modifier (-1 for every point of damage above 10) which gives her a pool of 4. The player rolls but gets no successes. This means that her character will die or be permanently damaged. Luckily for her she has a Fate Point left...

KNOCKED OUT

If you wish to knock someone out you have to take them totally by surprise. If you suddenly hit, shoot or otherwise attack a totally unprepared person and hit the head he'll fall down unconscious. This can be done by sneaking up on them and hit them in the back of the head or by suddenly attacking them while facing them head on. The head on approach can only be done in certain cases. Attacking someone suddenly from the front that's prepared (a bodyguard, bouncer, cop or any other individual that is vigilant or have a reason to be weary of you) will not render them unconscious. However, if the person is totally relaxed by your presence (thinks he's your friend, or maybe that you're a trusted co-worker or totally harmless) he can be knocked out. A person knocked out like this is out for 2D minutes. If the attack is done from the front the victim gets a chance to roll for Brawn. If his successes equals or surpasses the attacker's successes he won't go down and will remain conscious.

SOURCES OF INJURIES

There are many different sources of injuries in the world. Some is the result of a hostile atmosphere while others are the result of accidental (or even intentional) sources. A terrain can be dangerous in and of itself with pitfalls and exposed wiring.

FIRE, CORROSIVES, ELECTRICITY AND EXTREME COLD

These do damage for every three seconds a person is subjected to them. How much damage depends on how powerful the source is (or how severe the exposure is). To simplify things the severity/exposure has been divided into four types: Mild, Harsh, Extreme and Incinerating. It takes a fire/corrosive about nine seconds before it starts to eat through armor if mild and six seconds if harsh. After this the individual will suffer the full damage and the durability will be diminished by the amount of damage inflicted as well.

Mild: 2 HP loss/3 seconds

Harsh: 4 HP loss/3 seconds

Extreme: 6 HP loss/3 seconds

Incinerating: 8 HP loss/3 seconds

FALLING

Falling is a pretty good way of ending up dead if the drop is long enough. If lucky something might soften the blow, such as water, cardboard boxes or whatever. The falling chart isn't measured in exact distances but instances. Armor reduces the damage by half its armor rating.

The falling system can be used to decide damage from crashes. The storyteller decides how severe he thinks a crash is and then pick a damage from the falling table. Crashes are more unpredictable and the damage can be deemed as bashing even if using "third story free fall" for example.

FALL	DAMAGE
Roll down a stair.	1D+4 bashing
Fall from the second story.	1D fatal
Thrown of a highway overpass.	1D+4 fatal
Third story free fall.	2D+2 fatal
Fifth story free fall.	2D+4 fatal

POISONS, DISEASE & RADIATION

To make things simple, effects of these sources of injury has been divided into two measurements: Severity and Intensity. Severity decides the damage and which type of damage (Bashing or Fatal) while intensity decides how often the damage is inflicted. A small dose of a poison can take several hours, days or even weeks to kill someone while large dose can kill within seconds or minutes. The storyteller has to combine Intensity and Severity as he sees fit depending on the situation. The short way of writing out Severity and Intensity is by using a /. So if an area has a radiation of Mild/Mild it means that it has a Mild Severity and a Mild Intensity.

Radiation, diseases and poisons will often cause secondary symptoms such as blisters, tremors, respiratory problems, vomiting and similar symptoms. The exact nature of the symptoms is up to the storyteller depending on the severity and source. This system can also be applied

for extreme weather conditions. As a general rule, a person is incapable of healing during the exposure to this type of damage.

SEVERITY

Soft: 1 bashing HP

Mild: 2 bashing HP

Hard: 4 fatal HP

Severe: 6 fatal HP

INTENSITY

Slight: Every 12- 24 hours

Mild: Every 1-6 hours

Concentrated: Every 10-30 minutes

Severe: 30 seconds to 1 minute

Insane: 3-10 seconds

Example: Victor has come across a hidden lab and an unknown pathogen has broken out and he's infected. The storyteller decides that the Severity is Hard and the Intensity is Mild (he sets the exact time of 3 hours since Mild intensity has a ratio of 1-6 hours). Every three hours Victor will lose 4 hit points due to the illness until he finds the anti-serum, the storyteller also decides that he suffers from shakes and bothersome tunnel vision (-1 to all Attention and actions that require precise eye hand coordination). If this would have been a situation involving radiation he would have had the option of removing himself from the radiated area.

Note on Poisons/Pathogens: You might want to have a system in place that allows characters to withstand a poison. In this case you can give a poison a Strength. This is shown in a modifier and success rate. The modifier shows how powerful the substance is while the success rate shows off how many successes the player needs to score in order to lessen or equalize the effects of the poison. It might be possible to completely avoid the effects of some poisons on a successful roll while others only will be lessened. A poison with a Strength of -2/1 would indicate that the player would have to make a Brawn roll with a -2 modifier and score 1 success in order to lessen/avoid the effects of the poison.

RECREATIONAL DRUGS

It is very hard to make an accurate table for these kinds of drugs since they have a tendency to affect people very differently, depending on the tolerance and psychological makeup of the individual. Rather than doing a clunky table some general symptoms of the drugs will be presented. Overdosing and the exact effect will be left in the hands of the storyteller, as he is best suited to decide the exact

ramifications from situation to situation. Aptitudes that are changed when taking some drugs don't affect the secondary attributes in any way. There are many other drugs beyond these such as PCP, ecstasy, cat, barbiturates, crack are just a few examples of additional drugs.

ALCOHOL

This is the most common drug in modern day society as it is legal and cheap. When drinking, the coordination, thought process, memory, reflexes and judgment are decreased. Many feel a heightened sense of self-esteem. The overall mood of an intoxicated person varies greatly. Some people are prone to violent tendencies and irritability when they reach a state of heavy intoxication. Others are more prone to break down into sentimentality. Over-consumption may lead to vomiting, blackouts, loss of consciousness and alcohol poisoning which might prove fatal.

Salts, minerals and fluids are drained from the body, which leads to a short period of detoxification and recuperation known as hangover. Headaches, sluggishness, anxiety, loss of balance, nausea, vomiting and loss of energy are often part of the package in this state. Hangovers may last as long as twenty-four hours if the intake of alcohol was sufficient. It usually takes forty-eight hours for all the alcohol to leave the system.

Attention, Brains, Quickness and Reaction are the most common Aptitudes to be negatively affected during a state of inebriation. Those experiencing aggression may find it easier to end up in fight or flight.

Withdrawal is both physical and psychological for those who are addicted. Shaking, vomiting, cramps and delirium are common side effects of detox. Those who have been severely addicted for a lengthy period of time might die if they go cold turkey, as the organs and the brain shut down from the shock, and the addiction has to be staged down.

OPIATES

There are various forms of opiates, ranging from milder derivatives found in cold medicines, to morphine and heroin. Opiates are most commonly deemed as prescription or illegal drugs. Opiates are highly addictive and the withdrawal, and addiction, are both expressed physically and psychologically.

A concentrated opiate, such as heroin or morphine, hinders the learning process and halts the ability of the brain to take in new information to a certain extent. Many who started using at an early age often have stopped in their psychological development, never reaching the emotional maturity of adulthood.

When under the influence the body becomes numb, and physical sensations aren't felt as much, and the user also experiences intense euphoria. The person may become very sluggish and often falls into a state of half sleep.



Most feel at peace and block out most things. This drug is considered a “downer” as users feel too powerless to do much of anything. Perception, physical performance, reflexes and thought processes are slowed down to a very high degree. As the brain is incapable of processing information to a certain extent the user may react calmly to situations that would scare, or set him off, under normal circumstances.

A slight withdrawal can be felt only a couple of hours later, after three to five days it is unbearable, resulting in fevers, vomiting, shakes, rants, anger, cramps, hallucinations and the inability to do much of anything. Severe addicts cannot go cold turkey as they might die from the shock. Derivatives are used in stages during detox (methadone being most common).

Most of the aptitudes are affected negatively, but when under the influence of smaller doses a person can still walk around, drive a car and talk, but he is still numb, sluggish and slow to react. The high usually lasts between two and four hours. An overdose leads to heart failure and vomiting. Long-time use results in the total shutdown of the immune system and internal organs, leading to death.

AMPHETAMINES

There are many kinds of amphetamine. Some are snorted while others are smoked or injected. Amphetamines are “uppers” making the individual highly active and somewhat manic. They need to do things all the time, such as talking in a rapid and unorganized fashion or taking their television apart. They usually need to keep themselves occupied in some manner, and they never get tired or feel any real exhaustion.

Thoughts become jumbled and fast paced, bearing little coherence. Judgment is often lost since a feeling of overconfidence is experienced. Pain and the ability to feel the effect of injuries are diminished as well. Some turn violent and if they do they are really dangerous. Those driven to rage in this state may end up on stage three on the fight or flight monitor with little provocation and might even end up suffering from a violent psychotic episode.

Long-time users are prone to psychosis and schizophrenia, and their internal organs and immune system may eventually shut down; often it begins with edemas and other severe effects. Tics, such as involuntary spasms of the face and of the limbs are frequent symptoms among users. This side effect is very common and heavy users are often referred to as “Tweakers” or “Twitchers.” Brains, Clout and Gut Feeling are the most common attribute that is negatively affected while Attention, Brawn and Reaction may get a slight boost. Quickness may also be negatively affected if the user is experiencing a tic. It takes a rather large amount to overdose to the point of death, but cardiac arrest is usually the cause of death in these cases. The effect lasts between two and five hours, and it is quite impossible to fall asleep.

CANNABIS

Cannabis is usually smoked as marijuana (dried leaves of the plant) or as hashish (treated sap from the plant). Cannabis is widespread even though it is illegal in most countries. The high results in a feeling of calm, a mellowed state of awareness and a proclivity towards esoteric and incoherent thoughts that are viewed as insightful by the user (even though they seldom are). Cannabis also stimulates the appetite causing the one under the influence to feel an overwhelming urge to eat (getting the “munchies”).

The use of cannabis can be very detrimental, even though few are privy to it. The drug inhibits the learning process, memory and motor skills. It also heightens the level of the frontal lobe’s intake of dopamine. It can lead to severe depressions between highs. Some users (often those that are genetically predisposed) may be more prone to psychosis (and in rare cases schizophrenia), especially the young that are much more severely affected. These consequences may not show up until much later in life. A high gone wrong can cause paranoia, dangerously heightened heart rate and hyperventilation. Cannabis

also has several medical benefits if used correctly as it may alleviate nausea and increase the appetite in cancer patients undergoing treatment and has shown that it can reduce the growth of certain tumors.

Someone who is high becomes sluggish and calm during the effect, and might experience mild hallucinations and fits of laughter. Users are seldom violent and tend to stay in one place, relaxing, but outbursts of paranoia happen from time to time depending on the well-being of the individual. The withdrawal caused by cannabis is purely psychological and it poses no physical danger whatsoever to go cold turkey. The effect of the high lasts for approximately six to eight hours. Brains, Attention, Gut Feeling and Reaction are usually affected somewhat negatively.

COCAINE

Cocaine may be injected, snorted, chewed or smoked depending on the type. The person experiences a state of euphoria and sometimes a sense of indestructibility may set in. The high lasts from twenty minutes to several hours depending on the dosage.

The initial signs include heightened heart rate, restlessness and hyperactivity. Sometimes the effect may be negative, and paranoia and depression may set in. Cocaine stimulates the central nervous system mainly, and long-time use may cause brain and nerve damage. People who experience aggression may, as with amphetamine, easily find themselves on stage three in the fight or flight monitor and in fits of psychosis if long term users. Pain and exhaustion doesn't affect the individual to the same extent and this, in combination with a heightened level of adrenaline, makes violent offenders under the influence of this drug very dangerous. Of course, judgment and reasoning is somewhat decreased as the user may think that he is unstoppable at times. Some users become quite the megalomaniacs under the sway of this drug. Overdoses cause the heart to race, which may lead to cardiac arrest. Brains and some motor skills may be negatively affected and Brawn may get a boost.

HALLUCINOGENS

These are hard to categorize since there are many different kinds. The negative physiological effect and damage due to long time use varies greatly, but they have one thing in common and that is that they cause a change in perception, thought processes and emotions. And overdoses and long term use will cause neurological damage.

What the individual experiences depends on his mood. Some dangers may arise. It is quite possible for someone to believe himself capable of flight, or water breathing, leading to severe accidents or death.

Long-time use often leads to mental illness and paranoia. Some drugs may affect internal organs and other physiological systems leading to illness and complications. The effects of hallucinogens last between two and eight hours.

SUFFOCATION

A person can hold his breath for up to a minute plus Brawn x 10 seconds, when this time is up he has to pass a Cool roll every 20 seconds. Every new roll comes with a -1 modifier. A failure shows that the person has passed out and he will die within one to two minutes if not given CPR.

FATIGUE

Noctum uses a very simplified system to deal with starvation, thirst and endurance. The storyteller decides when a character begins to get tired. When they get tired the storyteller call for a Brawn roll. If this fails the character gets a -1 to all rolls. When the negative modifier surpasses Brawn the character needs to rest. How often the roll is done is up to the storyteller. Maybe one every 10 minutes if doing a strenuous task, every hour if hiking or every five minutes if pushing it to the max. How long a character needs to rest depends on the activity. Ten to thirty minutes minus Brawn minutes is a good scale to use.

A character can survive three days without water or two weeks without food if he has access to water. If suffering from mild thirst or starvation the character will get a -2 modifier to all rolls. If suffering severely (the last day of thirst or the last week of starvation) the character loses his ability to run and gets a -4 modifier. The last hours of thirst or the last day of starvation he can only crawl and is basically unaware of his surroundings. If not given fluids or food within this last time period he will die.

EXPLOSIONS

These do damage according to a blast radius. Explosives are divided in the following radiuses: Ground Zero, (GZ) Devastating (DEV), Destructive (DES) and Blasting (BLA). Each type of explosive has a different reach on the radiuses. The damage of grenades at Blasting radius is counted as bashing as it's only a concussive effect at that range.

Explosions which cause fatal damage can't fully be countered by worn armor. All armor value is counted as half when subjected to explosives.

Example of explosive, more information can be found in the Equipment section.

Grenade	GZ	DEV	DES	BLA
	1 - 2 m (8+1D)	3-4m (4+1D)	5 m (2+1D)	6 m (1D)

SURGERY & COMA

Suffering critical hits or being reduced to zero hit points might require that the afflicted person has to undergo surgery. Surgery takes time (see Reduction Time) and no

more than two to four, depending on the surgery, failures are allowed; if this occurs the patient dies on the table. Negative and positive modifiers might be applied as a result of circumstances, placement of the wound and equipment. Removing a bullet that is stuck in the lungs while in a high-tech hospital environment while aided by a surgical team is much easier than removing a bullet that is stuck between the skull and the brain while in a field hospital out in the desert.

An alternative to death that shouldn't be used to often is coma. Coma is usually a result of a major physical trauma. When, how, and if a character wakes up from this state no one knows except the storyteller.

AD HOC TREATMENT

The characters may be on the run from the law as well as their impending doom. In some cases a character will need stitches, surgery, bullet removal and all kinds of treatment but is unable to get to a hospital. These situations can create dramatic and quite disturbing scenes.

Imagine two desperados helping each other out, digging out bullets from their flesh with a pair of candle-burned pliers. Thick needles and fishing line is used to close the wounds. With the help of the same searing hot pliers other wounds are painfully cauterized to stop the bleeding.

There are many things that characters can, and often will, use to treat injuries when they don't have access to

a hospital. When digging out bullets, burning wounds closed and stitching bullet wounds with not much skill, with a hand unsteady from painkillers and whiskey, things often go wrong. The result is, in the best-case scenario, ugly scars. Substantial nerve damage and nicked arteries are a common problem when unskilled surgery and bullet removal is being conducted. The knowledge of First Aid and Medicine reduces the risk of these things but treatment of severe wounds with on-the-spot equipment is always risky.

INFECTION

If a wound is exposed to bacteria or inflicted with a particularly dirty weapon (such as a knife that has been picked up from the floor of a sewer) the character risks getting an infection. Every hour the wound isn't cleaned he has to test his Brawn. This can be avoided if the character gets a dose of strong antibiotics before an hour has passed. The modifier ranges from 0 to -4 depending on how severe the concentration of bacteria is. If he fails blood poisoning and infection sets in. When this happens the wound won't heal and he loses 1 hit point every 24 hours (which he cannot regain until the infection is barred). After three days gangrene sets in and surgery has to be performed to remove the spreading necrosis (fly larvae can also be used in some cases). A one-week treatment with antibiotics annihilates the infection and the negative effect of the infection is halted during the treatment. Infection and blood poisoning lead to severe fevers, and the storyteller has to determine to which degree this affects the character.

To Hospital Security

I really have to say that you guys suck! I'm working nightshift here and you would think that the shit I've been telling you would have been taken care of the day after you received my first message, but no! It has been three fucking days since I sent it to you. I tried to get a hold of you but it seems you're always "in another wing".

Anyway, have you done that background check on the new temp, that Randy guy? Don't try to blow smoke up my ass and tell me you did it when he was hired, with the staff shortage I know that management hire non-medical personnel off the books. I'm just a night watchman, but I've been working here for five years and I know when something is off.

The morgue is my territory and I like to have it neat. Every time Randy have been down here things have gone missing. I did the inventory: Five scalpels, one bone saw, two ribcage expanders and a liver thermometer. That's what's gone missing. So are you going to check him out?

Oh yeah, there's another thing. That body we were going to give to the med-students over at the university is gone. It would be all hunky-dory but it seems there aren't any logs containing ANY information of when it was picked up or by whom. This is also something that falls under your jurisdiction. If you don't get off your fat asses and do something about this I will file a complaint to management.

CHAPTER 7

COMBAT

From the journal of Olivia Lake

It had been one week since Victor was attacked and he was going to be released from the hospital in a day or two. In the meantime, the rest of us tried to find out who was controlling these damn things. But how the hell did one go about finding that out? I did the only thing I knew how to: I handled it like an investigative reporter.

Two days after the attack on Victor, when I had worked up the courage, I decided to go back to the warehouse where he was attacked. This time I brought Huxley and went there during the day. The place had been cleared out. I checked out the owner, but she was a nobody who had inherited the place. Luckily she was a lonely old lady who liked to talk and she revealed the name of the person she had rented it to the last couple of weeks, a man named Frank Deckard. The only info I managed to dig up on him was that he was 43 years old, had served in the military, was currently unemployed and his address. Silak went off on his own to talk to some occultists he knew while Caleb was running down some leads through his computer. And Huxley ... she went off on a coke bender. I'll reiterate: Coked-up psychopath....

So here I was, late afternoon, alone, outside the decrepit farmhouse belonging to Frank Deckard. The windows sloppily boarded up, the bone-yellow paint peeling off the colonial era building. There was no answer when I knocked, but I wasn't about to give up. I have a knack for B&E and it only took me a minute or so to pop the lock.

The first thing that hit me when walked inside was the smell, or rather the stench. Copperish, dank and with a faint odor of ammonia. Decomposition. The thick cloud cover in combination with the boarded up windows and heavy curtains made it quite dark inside. Camera in one hand, my knife in the other. I do believe that all that has occurred these last weeks has reduced my IQ. "What the hell am I doing here alone?" Was the only thing that I could think in that very moment. Still I pressed on like some bimbo in a horror movie.

It was when I stepped into the kitchen that I saw the bodies. They were eviscerated, hacked apart and the limbs had been stacked in neat little piles. The flies buzzed, grown fat on the putrid feast. I threw up. After a minute or so, I managed to stop hurling and catch my breath. I recorded the slaughter with trembling hands.

A voice came from behind me, coarse, raw and menacing. It uttered three words. "Cute little doll...." I turned in time to see the lumbering shape of a filthy and obese man standing right behind me, stained with blood. He moved fast for his size and in my attempt to avoid the axe he swung I fell to the floor. It seemed that I was about to die like the horror movie bimbo I had been reduced to. So much for that college degree; it seems I'm a very dumb smart person...

Yelping, I scrambled backwards, under the kitchen table. Splinters rained down as he buried the axe in it just above my head. I screamed when he violently knocked the table aside. I remember him grinning while raising the axe as I curled helplessly into a knot on the grimy, bloodstained floor. In that moment, I heard Silak's voice. "Stay down!" The world seemed to explode when he rushed through the front door and opened fire with his dual .45s...



Combat is handled in rounds. Each round is comprised of a three second period. Within this time, all involved parties get to perform an action. When violence erupts, the one with the highest Reaction is the first to act in a round, then the one with the second highest, then the third and so forth. This is called *Initiative*. However, maneuvers like hitting the deck or going on the defensive can be done at any time (this is true for all evasive maneuvers), no matter your Initiative, as long as you haven't yet acted in this round. You can always try to avoid an attack if you see it coming. Every player declares the action of his character, starting with the player who goes last. It's also possible to delay an action, acting later in the round. When everyone has acted in the round, if the skirmish is still ongoing, the next round begins and everyone gets to act again.

If there's a surprise attack, the one with the highest Reaction on the defenders' side gets to make a Reaction roll. If successful, he will be able to run for cover, hit the deck or dodge/duck when being attacked. So do the rest of the defenders if he has yelled a warning to his comrades. If not, they will be defenseless to the first attack.

If there's some uncertainty about who goes first (or if you need to up the suspense), you simply roll 1D for each participant, adding their individual Reaction to the roll. The one with the highest number goes first.

TIME & MOVEMENT

First of it is important to note that detailed movement seldom is employed in combat. It should only be used when it is very important so the action isn't reduced to a combat simulator. Generally, there is seldom a need to keep track of exact movement and distances. This will in most cases just hamper the flow and turn an otherwise suspenseful scene into a nitpicking over exact details. However, at times some creatures will be much faster than humans and it can be good to understand just how much faster they are. As mentioned, all involved combatants act during a series of three second periods called rounds. During a round, everyone involved can complete an action that takes no more than three seconds. The movement rate of a human during this period can be seen in the following table.

QUICKNESS	METERS PER ROUND
1	20
2-3	30
4-5	35
+1 above 5	+5 meters

Running and shooting at the same time incurs a -2 modifier to Shooting rolls. Sprinting adds another +5 meters per round but it is impossible to do anything else while sprinting. Trying to hit someone that sprints (if he's not running straight at the shooter) gives a -3 modifier, and the runner can't generally hit anything if trying to shoot while running at full speed. When walking, engaging in stealth or dragging a heavy object, the movement rate is only 5 meters per round.

BULLETS VS. HOOFING IT

If a person without a ranged weapon is standing over two meters from a person armed with a ranged weapon and tries to attack or run, the person with the ranged weapon will always be able to attack him before he can act. This disregards Reaction score, as squeezing the trigger takes far less time than running a couple of meters. If the shooter has his attention diverted from the close combatant, the close combat party is allowed to make a Quickness + Close Combat roll. If he gains two successes, he has successfully attacked the shooter before being shot (use this roll as the attack roll). This works from a distance as far as up to four meters.

Example 1: Michael has a Reaction score of 2, while Gina has a Reaction of 4. Michael has a gun pointed at Gina, who is standing three meters from him. Gina tries to go for the gun, but even though she has a higher Reaction than Michael, the latter gets to act first since he has the gun. Michael squeezes the trigger as Gina comes at him. This goes to show that even a high Reaction seldom beats a bullet. If Michael would have been distracted, say by a sudden flash of light, Gina would have been allowed to make a Quickness + Close Combat roll, since she stands within four meters. If Gina had rolled two successes on this roll, she would have been able to attack Michael up close, maybe even wrestling the gun from him, before Michael managed to shoot her.

BRAWLS

For melee attacks, you roll Brawn + Close Combat or Quickness + Close Combat (depending on if you use a heavy handed power style or a gracious precision style of fighting). If you're unarmed, the base damage is 2 and each success adds +1 (usually bashing). You can also grapple on a successful roll. If a person is grappled, he can try to break free using his Brawn/Quickness + Close Combat to escape the grapple. It's a simple contested test, done every round. If the grappled party wins, he's free. However, for every

additional attempt he gets -2 on his rolls to break free. If reduced to zero dice, the grappler has choked him out, or otherwise locked him in a vice grip or rendered him unconscious by pressure points. The person usually wakes up (if not just held, in which case he's still conscious) after 30 + 1D x 10 seconds after being incapacitated by a grapple. If sneaking up behind someone who is unaware and one manages to make a headlock, the victim immediately gets a -3 on his roll to get free. It's a very good way to disable guards and the like.

RELOAD

Managing ammunition and reloads should only be done if it adds to the story. It is appropriate if it will create a dramatic scene, or when running low on resources is a part of the suspense and grit. Otherwise characters are presumed to reload in time and carry enough ammunition to get them through a firefight or two.

Discarding a clip (letting it just fall to the ground) and slamming in another takes one round. If the person has at least 3 in Shooting, he can make a Quickness + Shooting roll with a -3 modifier. If successful, he will be allowed to fire his weapon during the same round in which he loaded it, using the result of this roll as his attack roll. He counts his Reaction as if it were two less than it is when attacking directly after loading like this.

Putting rounds in a weapon/clip one by one is a bit more time consuming. Provided the ammunition is easy to reach (gun belt, easily accessible pocket), these are put in at a rate of one per second, for a total of three rounds per round.

READY/HOLSTER WEAPON

It takes about a second to ready a weapon that is easily accessible in a holster. Hard to reach weapons (like those in an ankle holster) take about three seconds to ready. If you wish to fire your weapon directly after drawing it, the roll to hit is made with Reaction + Shooting and a -2 modifier. Count your Reaction as one less when it comes to order of attack.

DUAL WIELD

One target: When using two weapons against the same target, the base damage of the weapons are combined as is the per success damage. One roll is still made as usual, but the attacker gets a -2 penalty.

Example: Jason levels his two heavy pistols and fires off one shot per weapon at a twisted flayed monstrosity that comes shambling towards him. Jason has a dice pool of 6, but since he has a -2 penalty, the player only rolls 4 dice. He scores two success. The base damage is normally 4, but is now 8 as the base damage of the two weapons are combined. The extra successes adds another 4 to the damage (the weapons do +1 per success and this is doubled when using two guns). The damage ends

up a total of 12, which is pretty high. The bullets tears off the lower left arm of the creature, splattering the concrete walls with black ichors.

Two targets: When attacking two targets, the attacker suffers a -3 penalty. In a close combat situation, two weapons add +1 to defense if going on the defensive (see below), but a -1 to defense otherwise. One roll is made for the attack; those hit suffer the base damage as usual, but the damage generated per success is divided as evenly as possible among the targets. If there's only one success on the attack, only one target is hit.

FROM COVER TO COVER

If you run from one cover to another while shooting, you make yourself a harder target. However, it's also harder for you to hit *your* target. Trying to hit someone on the run is done with a -2 modifier, but the one running gets a -3 on his attack roll. Any ranged damage that hits the runner also has its base damage reduced by -2 (minimum 1).

Example: Huxley is running from behind a parked car to a doorway across the street, all the while a enforcer is trying to shoot her. While on the run, Huxley squeezes off a few shots at the guy. The enforcer gets a -2 to hit Huxley, but Huxley also gets a -3 to hit the enforcer. However, if Huxley is hit, the base damage will be reduced by -2 as he's a moving target, while Huxley's damage will be unaffected if he hits the mercenary, since the soldier is a stationary target.

HITTING THE DECK

If trying to avoid getting shot, the defender can also throw himself on the ground or behind cover. The standard modifier for hitting someone diving for cover is -4. If the one hitting the deck wishes to shoot, his roll gets a -5 modifier. It takes one action and a complete round to rise from prone.

DEFENSE IN COMBAT

When in close combat, the character does everything in his power to stay out of harm's way. He ducks and parries and bobs and weaves to avoid deadly blows. In game mechanical terms, his defense acts as a negative modifier which applies to attackers that try to engage him in close combat (hand to hand or melee). It also applies to thrown projectiles, but *not* to firearms. If the character faces multiple opponents, his defense is counted as one less for each separate opponent beyond the first. However, defense only applies to enemies that the character is aware of and can see.

Example 1: Huxley is tearing it up in a dive bar after a big bank job and has ended up on the business end of a knife after a disagreement got out of control. Huxley has a defense of 3. This means that her opponent suffers a -3 modifier to his attacks when trying to hit Huxley.

***Example 2:** Without breaking a sweat, Huxley took out the guy and snapped the knife in two. But the guy has friends. Three of them, in fact. They gang up on Huxley. As there are two additional attackers beyond one, her defense is lowered by 2. This means that Huxley's defense is reduced to only 1. Each attacker will get a -1 to his attack as Huxley has a hard time keeping up with the hail of blows and kicks. She's in trouble.*

ON THE DEFENSIVE

When a character wishes to do nothing other than avoid incoming attacks in a close combat situation, he can go on the defensive. A character on the defensive can do little besides move half his running speed and avoid attacks. This will add +2 to his defense. A player that wishes to put his character on the defensive must declare this before his character has acted in the round. A character can even go on the defensive out of turn, disregarding the highest Reaction score.

***Example:** Realizing that she's in trouble while facing three opponents, Huxley goes on the defensive. This means that her defense trait is increased by 2. The attackers now get a -3 modifier. Huxley can't attack, but she might stay on her feet long enough for her fellow crime associate to notice the ruckus from across the bar. If she would have gone on the defensive while facing one opponent, her defense would have been 5 (original defense 3 +2 for going on the defensive).*

FIRING INTO BRAWLS

If you fire into a brawl and want to hit a specific person (and miss another), some modifiers apply. First of all, the shooter gets a -2 for all the movement and scuffling going on, and then he gets a -1 for each person he wishes to avoid hurting. If the roll is successful he hits his target, but if he misses, it's a fifty-fifty chance that he hits the person he wants to avoid hitting. If using a shotgun, the penalty to hit is counted as -4. In the case of an unintentional hit, re-roll Attention + Shooting. The minimum damage, regardless of the roll's result, is the weapon's base damage.

POINT BLANK

If the target isn't hitting the deck (see above) or running, involved in a fist fight or otherwise moving fast, a point blank shot hits automatically. The attacker still gets to roll (Shooting + Attention) just to determine if he does extra damage beyond the base damage. And the base damage itself is increased by +3. If the target is moving, a point blank shot gets a +2 modifier but the shooter will miss if the roll fails. The end of the barrel has to be one meter or closer to the target in order for it to count as point blank.

EXECUTION

If a person (human) is asleep, tied down or otherwise at the mercy of another, the attacker may execute him. Using a knife, heavy blunt object or firearm he can snuff out his life. No roll is required, the storyteller simply states if the victim dies or not. Sometimes more than one attack is required if the weapon isn't adequate.

CALLED SHOTS & AIMING

When you shoot at a target, you generally hit the largest area on that target (the torso on humanoid creatures) if you haven't called a shot. Hitting a medium-sized target (leg or arm) is done with a -2 modifier. Targeting the head or targets of similar size incurs a -3 penalty. Anything smaller suffers a -4 penalty. Take these modifiers into account while trying to hit a target in cover (like when just the arm is sticking out, etc.).

Larger targets work the other way around. Hitting something that's double the size of a human is done with a +1 modifier, something the size of a car would grant a +2 modifier and anything bigger would give a +3 modifier. When aiming, it gets easier to hit something. Every round spent aiming will give a +1 modifier to hit, but it's only possible to aim for fifteen seconds and while standing still.

When calling a shot at close combat range the negative modifier is counted as one less and it's impossible to aim in close combat in order to get a better hit. But remember that a person can parry the gun arm and keep the barrel away from himself at this distance, giving him the opportunity to parry these attacks like any others when in this range. This means that the target's defense is taken into account.

RANGE

If a target is situated within 1/3 of the weapon's total range, it's considered to be within Short range. If the target is situated within 2/3 of the range, it's considered Normal range, and beyond this it's considered Long range. Use this as a rough estimation. A weapon with a range of 60 meters would have the following ranges: Short 1-20, Normal 21-40, Long 41-60. The further away the target is the harder it is to hit it. See the range table.

RANGE	MODIFIER
Short	+1
Normal	+0
Long	-2

SHOTGUN RULES

Shots from these weapons scatter and create an arc of fire if loaded with pellets. The arc gets wider the further the pellets travel (ignoring the range table above). This results in easier hits at a distance but a reduction in damage. Therefore shotguns have three sets of damages. Each damage code corresponds to a third of the range, in the order they appear. So if a shotgun has a range of 60 meters the first (and highest) damage code would apply in the 1-20 meter range, the second to the 21-40 range and the third damage code to 41-60 range.

The per success damage gets locked after the first range. At the second range only up to three successes will count when calculating damage and at the third range only two successes will count. Any surplus damage due to extra successes is ignored. However, a +1 modifier to hit applies for the second range and a total of +2 applies to the last range.

Example: Jason has gotten his hands on a shotgun as he stalks the corridors of a demon infested mental hospital, hoping to fight his way to his car in the garage. He sees a possessed patient from a distance as the creature gnaws away at a corpse. His shotgun has a range of 90 meters; the demon is at about 40 meters (30-60 meter range). Jason squeezes off a shot. He gets a +1 bonus because of the range as the space between the pellets widens. But no matter how many successes he gets, every success beyond the third won't add to the damage as the widening also disperses the kinetic energy of the shot, lessening the damage.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS

Sometimes you want to do two things at the same time, and in this case multiple actions apply. It's possible to perform three actions within a three second period. A second action will impose a -2 penalty, and the third action will impose a -3 penalty. The actions have to be physically possible and reasonable to the situation. The player rolls for every action, applying the final modifier to all rolls. Multiple actions do not allow for faster movement or reloads.

Example: Jenny, an obsessed occult investigator, wants to kick a crazed death cultist in the groin while throwing her knife at a second cultist who is standing further away. This counts as two actions, which imposes a -2 modifier. Jenny has a score of 5 when using Close Combat and 6 when throwing the knife. This means that she will have a pool of 3 when kicking and 4 when throwing the knife, as the -2 modifier applies to both rolls.

MULTIPLE SHOTS

When firing multiple shots, a negative modifier applies. The modifier is equal to the total amount of bullets fired. The ROF of a weapon decides how many shots that can be fired during a round. If a gun has ROF 4, it means that the character can fire four bullets. He will get a -2 for the second bullet, -3 for the third and -4 on the fourth. The final modifier is added to the roll, as with other multiple actions, but only one roll is made. For each bullet fired beyond the first, the base damage of the weapon increases by +2 if hitting the same target. It's virtually impossible to switch targets while shooting like this, and only if people stand really close (or behind the target, coming into line of sight as the target falls) is it possible to hit a secondary or tertiary target. In most cases, this is purely a side effect or collateral damage. Stray bullets of this kind inflict base damage plus successes as normal.

Note: When firing multiple shots while dual wielding, the multiple shot system works exactly the same as when using one gun, but take the modifiers involved with dual wielding into account.

Example: Jenny managed to drop the two cultists, but there is a third one coming at her wielding an axe. Jenny has drawn her 9mm Beretta. It has a ROF of 3. Jenny wants to pump 3 rounds into the cultist in order to guarantee a takedown. Since she fires 3 bullets, she gets a -3 penalty. Jenny's Attention + Shooting pool is 6; after the modifier (-3) for the multiple shots has been subtracted, the pool is 3 dice. The player only have to make the one roll for all shots. Either they all hit or they all miss. She gets 3 successes. The base damage for the gun is normally 4, and with the three successes the damage is 7. But each shot beyond the first increases the base damage by +2, and as two extra shots were fired, the base damage is increased by a total of 4. This means that the total damage is 11! As her gun spits out the bullets the cultist goes down in a spray of crimson.

ALTERNATE FIRING MODES

Auto Fire: This can either hit one person and increase the base damage by +4, or hit five targets that stand in a cluster and cause base damage plus evenly distributed per success damage on all of them. Auto fire used in this way gives a -1 modifier and expends 10 bullets. Then one can just spray, hoping to hit something. *If the shooter doesn't have the Auto Fire training he will suffer a -3 modifier instead of a -1.*

Burst: Increases the base damage by +2 and expends 5 bullets.

Example 1: *From nowhere a Death Dweller jumps out at Harry, a rookie SWAT team member, while he is sweeping the subbasement of a crack house. Shocked, he simply employs his old point-and-spray tactics. He uses auto fire (and has the Auto Fire Training). He has a score of 5, but the auto fire gives him a -1 modifier, leaving him at 4 dice. He expends 10 bullets and manages to get one success. His weapon normally has a base damage of 6, but has it increased to 10 as it gets a +4 due to the auto fire. He scores three successes and in the end the Death Dweller gets hit for 13 points of damage. That's about half the creature's hit points, and the bullets tear through its torso. Another volley like that and the Death Dweller will be taken out.*

Example 2: *A crazed truck driver, suffering from severe psychosis, has gotten his hands on a SMG and entered a road stop diner and the place is packed. Screaming about monsters living under the skin of humans, he squeezes the trigger and sprays bullets wildly into the crowd. He covers a five meter area*

and there are more than five people in it but only five can be hit. He rolls and scores one success. The base damage is 4 and the per success damage is 2. Three people lose 4 hit point while two lose 5 (evenly distributed per success damage). The unarmed crowd tries to flee as the lunatic squeezes the trigger again...

SURPRISE ATTACKS

An attack staged against an enemy that's not currently in combat and who is unaware of the attack is deemed a surprise attack. The attack only fails if a botch occurs, otherwise it hits. These attacks add +1 to the base damage and +1 to the per success damage. After the first hit, the enemy is aware and can't be attacked with the same method as he's now on high alert (if he survived).

FIRING BLIND

If firing over cover without looking as a suppressive method, or blindly into the dark out of fear, or if firing without seeing the target or targets, it's all about chance and blind luck. In these cases the storyteller must decide what the odds are that a hit or several will occur. Full auto against several enemies will have a greater chance to hit than a couple of bullets fired against one target. At times there's no chance at all. The best thing to do when there's a chance of a blind hit is to figure out the approximate chance of a hit and roll 1D. If the dice comes up in favor of the shooter (hit the number/numbers that the storyteller chose), it's a hit and the weapon will do base damage plus one success damage to its intended targets.

VISUAL MODIFIERS

Bad lighting, smoke and similar visual obstacles can be a factor in combat (and many other situations). Thin smoke or dusky conditions might give a -1 penalty while extremely bad lighting and thick veils of smoke can give up to -2 or -4.

Miss, Miss, Hit: When you play out combat and battles, you should make them come alive. For instance, if an character and a NPC are fighting hand to hand and both miss two times in a row, they don't "miss" as such and certainly don't stand still in one spot throwing slow punches in a "hit and miss" kind of way. The fight is violent, a missed punch might have been parried or avoided or actually hit but the impact was too light to cause any actual damage. Think about a dramatic movie fight. The combatants grapple, maneuver and hit their opponent in ways that don't really inflict any damage as such. A poor hit to the arm, a kick that barely hits, sliding to the side with no real impact. And make sure you take the environment into account. There are all kinds of hard objects and hindrances. Also, many fighters end up on the floor in a brutal grapple, choking and punching. A fight is as much about hindering the opponent from inflicting any real damage on you as it is about inflicting damage to him.

COMBAT QUICK REFERENCE TABLE

CALLLED SHOTS & AIMING

Target	Modifier
Arm/Leg	-2
Head	-3
Hand/Foot	-4
Eye/Cent	-5
Ox/Small Car	+1
Normal Size Car	+2
Helicopter/ Elephant	+3
Very Large Target	+4
Aiming	+1/Round (max +3)

MULTIPLE SHOTS TABLE

Nr of shots fired	Modifier	Dmg Mod
2	-2	+2
3	-3	+4
4	-4	+6
5	-5	+8

CIRCUMSTANCE MOD TABLE

Conditions	Modifier
Dusk/Mist/Bad Ligthing	-1
Heavy Rain/Smoke	-3
Flashlight in Pitch Black	--3
Blizzard/Starlight	-4
Shooter is running	-3
Target is running	-2
Both are running	-5
Target is hitting the deck	-4
Shooter is hitting the deck	-5
Dual Wield – One Target	-2
Dual Wield – Two Targets	-3

SHOTGUN TABLE

Range	Modifier	PSD-lock
Short	+1	n/a
Normal	+1	3
Long	+2	2

ALTERNATE FIRING TABLE

Auto Fire: This can either hit one person and increase the base damage with +4 or hit five targets that stand in a cluster and cause base damage plus evenly distributed per success damage on all of them. Auto fire used in this way gives a -1 modifier and expends 10 bullets. Then one can just spray, hoping to hit something.

Burst: Increases the base damage on a target with +2 and expends 5 bullets.

CHAPTER 8

EQUIPMENT

From the journal of Olivia Lake

The occult lead Silak had followed luckily led to Frank Deckard. Apparently, he was part of a bizarre fringe cult that most occultists thought only to be a rumor. It was some twisted Christian hermetic dogma which centered on eternal life through the devouring of the unbelievers, or some such messed up shit. Silak left that sick bastard riddled with bullets on the floor. This was probably the first time in my life that I was glad that one human had killed another. Sure, self-preservation and all that, but I'm still not sure how I feel about my reaction.

In any event, we investigated the house. Someone had scribbled crazy words all over the walls and a bunch of numbers repeated over and over. When I stumbled across the sentence "Of flesh, wire and steel it calls to us," I shivered, haunted by the flashback I'd had back at the asylum. I filmed everything and then we got the hell out of that place.

Huxley returned a day later, about the same time Victor was released from the hospital. At this point we floated around staying at hotels only using cash. We had no idea what kind of connections these cultists had and wanted to stay off the grid. Though I was quite certain, at least if Deckard was anything to go by, that this cult wasn't all that organized. But they had found us before using ... unnatural means and Silak assured me that we were better off being extra careful. I didn't argue with him.

We scratched our heads over those numbers we had found but Huxley was the one who cracked it. Obviously the coke hadn't fried her brain completely; she recognized them as map coordinates. I was surprised to learn that she had been an U.S. Ranger. The coordinates led us to Fort Dwyer, an old abandoned military base in the middle of nowhere. And for once we did the smart thing and went together.

Just how it came to be that we were split up in the dark and being chased down like dogs by a group of unstoppable, knife-wielding psychopaths is a story best told visually, so I hope you have access to my video files. As it was, Caleb, Victor and I found ourselves in a dark service elevator going down while some monstrosities banged on the ceiling. The whole damn car had shook so hard that I dropped my camera, sending it skittering across the floor. At least it didn't break. By then the damn monster had begun to rip open the metal roof. I had lost it completely, wailing like a stuck pig. And Victor? He fired wildly straight up at the damn thing. We soon discovered that bullets only pissed it off. Truth be told, I'm amazed that I'm still alive and able to write all this down now when I look back...

Characters will often use some form of equipment, may it be guns, lock picks or flashlights. This chapter lists some equipment that might come in handy in Noctum. There is of course even more equipment available in the world but these trinkets should suffice.

Yes, there are big guns and explosives and whatnot but that doesn't mean that the characters should have them. It is hard and expensive to come by illegal weapons. Which weapons you allow in your game depend on your style of play. However, you should keep in mind: if you hand out assault rifles and explosives like candy to the players, horror might be turned into a shoot-'em-up. On the other hand, some creatures among the minions are impervious to most weapons anyway. Shooting a powerful gun that has no effect on the target might be just as scary as being unarmed against a lesser monstrosity. It is all about balance and style of play.

***Note:** Prices and such are in place if for some reason the characters want to go on a shopping spree. If they want to buy ridiculous amounts of gear the storyteller should keep track to see if they can afford it. Otherwise, if not strapped for cash, characters will be able to get what they need within reason without detailing the exact fund transactions as long as they have the right contacts. The storyteller can just do a simple deduction from their cash if he feels it necessary. No need to become accountants. Weapons, explosives and such often have restrictions and the storyteller decides what goes depending on which country the story takes place in.*

ARMOR

Bulletproof vests can be a lifesaver. Bulletproof clothing has an *Armor Value* and resilience like any other object. If shot when wearing a vest, all damage done to the protected section isn't just scaled down, it is converted to bashing. This is due to the fact that bulletproof clothing

redistributes the force of the bullet, making the impact less direct. Armor is basically worthless when pitted against heavy machine guns and heavy rifles.

Some armor is heavy and bulky; this is represented with a negative modifier and a reduced movement. The modifier applies to most actions involving Quickness and maneuverability. Armor (except helmets) provides little protection against falling damage. Ceramic plating might protect some. Most vests can only take a few rounds after which they are worthless as protection. Each hit on an armor that causes 4 or more lethal damage reduces its Armor Value by 1. When reduced to half its original value it no longer converts fatal to bashing damage and when the Armor Value is reduced to 0 the armor is worthless.

Armor	AV	Mod	Move	Cost
Kevlar vest	3			600
Bulletproof vest	4	-2	-1	1200
Ceramic vest	5	-3	-2	1500
Kevlar leggings	3	-1	-1	800
S.W.A.T helmet	4	Attention (-1)		600

FIREARMS

Distinctions are made between different weapons within the same class, such as revolvers or semiautomatic handguns. Some frown upon the idea of letting guns into the game while others don't. If weapons are of none or little importance in your stories you can just choose a few (for example, 38 Special and the Magnum .44) and use them as "standard" templates for light and heavy handguns.

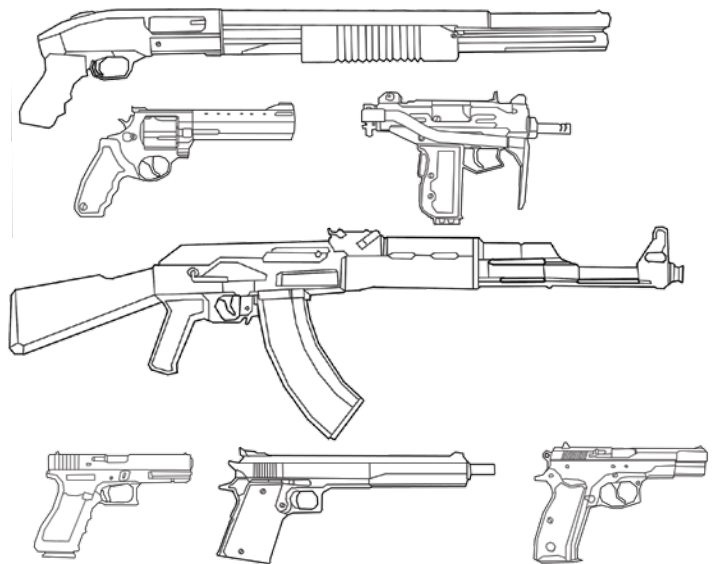
However, some like to have more details and damage range in their game. This is the main reason for having thorough and varying weapon stats. It is better to provide choices than to take them away.

DMG: This shows the amount of basic damage generated upon a hit. To this each success.

Mag: The magazine shows how many rounds that a gun can hold.

ROF: Rate Of Fire is the number of bullets a weapon can fire in a round. A number indicates how many single shots that can be fired by repeatedly pulling the trigger in a round. *A = Auto Fire, B = Burst Fire*. Many weapons have multiple firing modes.

Short/Normal/Long: This shows the three different ranges of a weapon. The scale is in meters.



REVOLVERS

Type	DMG	Mag	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
S&W 38 Special	3	6	2	1-15	16-30	31-45	200
Ruger 32 Caliber Revolver	3	5	1	1-15	16-30	31-45	150
Magnum .357	4	6	1	1-30	31-60	61-90	900
Magnum .44	5	6	1	1-30	31-60	61-90	800

SEMI-AUTOMATIC HANDGUNS

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
Desert Eagle 357	4	9	2	1-30	31-60	61-90	1200
Colt 1911	5	7	2	1-25	26-50	51-75	800
Walter PPK	3	7	2	1-15	16-30	31-45	400
Ruger 22	3	10	3	1-15	16-30	31-45	300
Glock 17	4	20	B5	1-20	21-40	41-60	600

SMGS

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
Micro Uzi	3	32	AB	1-10	11-20	21-30	1000
Mac-10	4	32	AB	1-15	16-30	31-45	900
HKMP-5AK4	3	30	AB1	1-15	16-30	31-45	2000
Calico 950	3	50	A	1-15	16-30	31-45	2000
P90	4	50	AB1	1-25	26-50	51-75	2500
TMP	2	30	AB	1-10	11-20	21-30	800

SHOTGUNS

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
Mossberg 500	6/4/2	7	-	1-15	16-30	31-45	700
Spas M12	7/5/3	8	1	1-20	21-40	41-60	2300
Sawed-Off Double Barreled.	6/2/1	2	1	1-5	6-15	16-20	100

ASSAULT RIFLES

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
AK 47	5	30	AB1	1-50	51-100	101-150	1500
Galil-Arm	6	30	AB1	1-40	41-80	81-120	2000
Steyr Aug	5	30	AB1	1-75	76-150	225	3500

HEAVY MACHINE GUNS

These use a belt feed of ammunition or a box magazine. A belt feed or box contains one hundred to four hundred bullets. No matter the final damage, a human that is hit directly by a heavy machine gun is counted as if being dazed and sustains a critical hit. Worn body armor offers no protection.

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
M60	7	Spec	A	1-100	101-200	201-300	9 000
XM312	8	Spec	A	1-100	101-200	201-300	7 000

RIFLES

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
TOZ 122	3	5	-	1-40	41-80	81-120	200
Kimber .22 LR	3	1	-	1-40	41-80	81-120	150
Winchester 1895	5	5	1	1-40	41-80	81-120	1400
FN30-11	6	5	-	1-75	76-150	151-225	2000
Springfield A4	5	5	-	1-50	51-100	101-150	1600

HEAVY RIFLES (sniper rifles)

Same rules applies as with heavy machine guns when hit with a sniper rifle.

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
Barrett M82A1	9	10	-	1-700	701-1400	1400-2200	25 000
VSSK Vychlop	6	5	2	1-300	301-600	601-900	18 000
Unique Alphine	7	5	1	1-500	501-1000	1001-1500	15 000

FLAMETHROWERS

Flamethrowers have a range of fifty meters. They are good for twenty gusts of fire. It is possible to keep on flaming continuously for twenty rounds if one wishes. A gust of flame does Extreme fire damage within fifteen meters and Harsh beyond fifteen meters. It is possible to continuously douse a target with fire, causing the allotted damage each round. It is likely that the victim's clothing will continue burning causing Mild fire damage each round. A flamethrower costs thirty thousand dollars and each new tank of fuel costs five hundred dollars.

RPGS & EXPLOSIVES

RPGs fire one rocket. It takes two rounds to reload the weapon. Rocket launchers have a range of nine hundred meters. The weapon itself costs fifty thousand dollars and each rocket costs three thousand dollars. When a rocket launcher is fired a pillar of fire vents out behind it. Anybody caught in it will be severely burned. The fire shoots out approximately five meters in a straight line upon firing the weapon.

There are a number of explosives and with the Explosives Training it is possible to create them from scratch or use them to create remotely detonated, timed or proximity detonated bombs.

Weapon	Ground Zero	Devastating	Destructive	Blasting	Range	Cost
*Rocket Launcher	1-5m (10+1D)	6-10m (8+1D)	11-15m (6+1D)	16-20m (4+1D)	1 km	6000
Grenade	1-2m (8+1D)	3-4m (4+1D)	5m (2+1D)	6m (1D)	Brawn x 10	100
C4/Dynamite	1-2m (10+1D)	3-4m (8+1D)	5m (4+1D)	6m (2+1D)	Brawn x 10 m	70 per 125 gram
Blasting Caps	1-2m (1D)	n/a	n/a	n/a	Brawn x 5 m	70 per 125 gram

LOW TECH RANGED WEAPONS

Low tech ranged weapons consist of crossbows, bows, thrown weapons and even improvised ones like flare guns and nail guns. A character can throw precision-thrown weapons (knives, shuriken) a distance equal to his Brawn multiplied by eight meters. Non-precision weapons (bricks, stones) can be thrown their Brawn times twelve meters. Thrown weapons do their damage plus the character's damage bonus. Some weapons will only be provided with one range since they are only used at close proximity.

Type	DMG	Clip	ROF	Short	Normal	Long	Cost
Crossbow	3	1		1-30	31-60	61-90	300
Bow	4	1		1-40	41-80	81-120	200
Nailgun	2	20			5		
Flare gun*	2	1			50		
Shuriken	0	-					15
Throwing knife	1	-					10
Fist-sized rock	0	-					
Brick	1	-					
Bug spray and lighter**	2	-			1		

*After the initial hit the flare will go on burning for 5 rounds doing Mild fire damage each round if it is stuck on a victim. The shooter gets a -2 modifier to hit with a flare gun.

** This improvised weapon can be used to spray for about fifteen seconds before it runs out. Each "gust" of fire (each round) does Mild fire damage.

MELEE WEAPONS

This is a broad and wide selection since almost everything can be used as a melee weapon. All kinds of weapons will be covered, improvised as well. This will give an idea of what kind of damage different tools and everyday objects may cause. Some weapons do bashing and others do deadly. This is often determined by how the weapon is used. If you hit a guy on a fleshy part of his body he might sustain bashing damage; if you hit him on the head or ribs he is most likely to suffer deadly damage. The storyteller is the final judge. Bladed weapons such as knives cause deadly damage of course. The diversity of melee weapons has to do with the genre itself. Noctum is a game of horror and the stats for improvised weapons might come in handy. When a melee weapon gives a plus (+) to the damage it means that the following value is added to the character's unarmed damage. So pistol whipping someone would do the original 3 in damage for unarmed combat +1 for the pistol.

Type	DMG
Butcher knife	4
Hatchet	4
Switchblade	3
Combat knife	4
Buck knife	3
Axe	5
Shovel	4
Metal pipe	2
Chainsaw	5
Tire iron	2
2x4	2
Chain	2
Chainsaw chain	3
Katana	5
Spear	4
Pitchfork	4
Wooden chair	2
Bottle (blunt)	2
Broken bottle or a shard of glass	2
Frying pan	3
Fire extinguisher (hitting)	3

Baseball bat	3
Spike club	4
Sword	4
Brass knuckles	+1
Nightstick	2
Hammer	3
Crowbar	3
Scalpel	3
Sledgehammer	4
Pistol whip/Rifle stock	+1



AMMO

There are different kinds of ammo that can be used. Some are used to increase damage while other types penetrate armor. In real life, ammo costs differently depending on the caliber. In Noctum, a general price has been listed per weapon class to simplify things. Special ammunition has a price multiplier attached to it that tells how much more the ammunition costs. Some ammo is hard to come by and very illegal.

Handguns (100 bullets): 35\$
Submachine guns (100 bullets): 35\$
Shotguns (10 shells): 30\$
Assault rifles (20 cartridges): 70\$
Rifles (20 cartridges): 50\$
Sniper rifles (20 cartridges): 150\$
Heavy machine guns (100 cartridge belt feed): 100\$

ARMOR PIERCING (AP)

When firing AP ammo at an object the armor value is counted as 2 lower than it is and the damage is not converted to Bashing. This ammo works against natural armor as well but not armor reduction.

Price multiplier: x 3

HOLLOW POINT (HP)

HP bullets have a hollowed-out shape on the tip of the round. On impact this bullet “mushrooms” into a flat shape and in so doing, damages more tissue. The damage is increased by +1 but count all armor value as 2 higher than it is.

Price multiplier: x 2

DUMDUM

Dumdum ammo is the poor man’s version of HP. By carving a cross in the bullet or filing it down it can be made to expand as HP. This adds +1 to the damage and all armor value is counted as if it were 2 higher.

Price multiplier:-

DEPLETED URANIUM

These bullets are extremely hard to come by and very expensive. They have a core of depleted uranium, which increases their kinetic force on impact. Count all armor value as if it were 3 lower and add +2 to the damage done. The armor-piercing effect won’t count when shooting creatures with damage reduction.

Price multiplier: x9

RUBBER BULLETS

These are used to stop people without killing them. They use the same damage code as the weapon but the damage is considered bashing, unless it hits the head or other sensitive areas.

Price multiplier:-

A FINAL NOTE ON WEAPONS

Some weapons are extremely hard to come by, such as heavy machine guns, sniper rifles and flamethrowers. The storyteller decides which weapons to let into the game depending on the style of play.

Some weapons are heavier than others and a low Brawn may hinder some characters from using them. Sometimes a weak person might not be able to handle a heavy weapon at all, while they at other times can handle it but suffer a negative modifier. Simply apply your logic. A character with a Brawn score of one or two is highly unlikely to wield a chainsaw effectively, or fire a heavy handgun with a firm grip.

GENERAL EQUIPMENT

General equipment covers everything from lock picks to weapon accessories. Everyday equipment isn’t covered since the price of these things is easily obtained, and it would be a waste of space explaining how a cell phone works. As always, the storyteller is the final arbiter of the legal factors regarding equipment.

Many explosives are in fact very cheap in real life but they are hard to come by. When using connections to illegally obtain explosives the price goes up by a factor of ten to twenty, as the street value of such things is very high.

LOCK PICK SET

This set contains all you need to pick a mechanical lock.

Cost: 20\$

AUTOMATIC LOCK PICK

This looks like a small gun but has a lock pick instead of a barrel. This device can be used by anyone to open mechanical locks. It is considered to have a pool of 4 when in use. These dices are rolled as a skill and the character’s skill rank has nothing to do with it. However, these tend to leave a lot of scratches on the lock and make the lock itself a bit rigid. People that have some insight will notice that someone has picked the lock.

Cost: 40\$

BYPASS KIT

A bypass kit is roughly the size of a smartphone and contains everything needed to bypass alarms, electronic locks and security circuitry.

Cost: 1000\$

PIQ KIT

A Paranormal Investigation & Quantifier kit holds everything a person needs to conduct a paranormal investigation. Movement trackers, air density analyzers, thermometers, EMF measuring and similar instruments are included. With this a person may record and track events to determine if they are a natural phenomenon or the result of paranormal activity. It is impossible to cover a whole house or a large area at the same time, for this a kit for each area (connected together to one computer consol) is needed. However, this equipment is usually enough for one or two investigators who wish to investigate and track a phenomenon.

Cost: 500\$

SAFECRACKER KIT

A safecracker kit fits inside a large attaché case and holds the tools needed to crack open a safe. This includes a powerful silenced titanium drill and fiber optic cameras.

Cost: 2300\$

CSI KIT

The CSI kit holds everything an investigator needs to process a crime scene and collect evidence: fingerprinting powder, luminol, evidence bags, black light, fiber-lifting film and everything else needed. The kit is good for ten investigations and fits inside a medium sized case. Refilling it costs 40\$.

Cost: 400\$

ANTIQUITIES AUTHENTICITY KIT

There are a number of ways you can detect forgeries (or marks of restoration). This kit provides black lights, chemicals, paint testing, ink scrapers, a micro electromagnetic camera and a lot of other things. A person skilled in a suitable field may determine if a painting is real or if a document really is as old as it claims. Academics and Forgery are the most common skills/trainings associated with this equipment. An expert using this equipment can establish authenticity with a eighty-five percent certainty. Additional tests (carbon dating, powerful electromagnetic scans) are needed to be a hundred percent sure. If there only is a seventy-five to eighty percent certainty that an object is the real deal, it is very likely that it is a fake. Less

than a seventy-five certainty of authenticity is a sure sign of a forgery. The kit can be used to test ten to twenty objects (depending on the bulk) before it needs to be restocked. It fits inside a medium sized case and restocking it costs 100\$.

Cost: 1000\$

LASER SIGHT

This laser sight is compatible with most weapons and reduces the negative modifier of any called shots with 2.

Cost: 60\$

SILENCER

Silencers muffle the sound of a gunshot, making it low and hard to recognize as a shot. A silencer is good for about three hundred shots before it is useless but you have to clean it often and take good care of it to make it work this long. The drawback is the fact that it slows the bullet somewhat. The range of the weapon is reduced by 25%.

Cost: 800\$

HOLSTERS AND STRAPS

These are good when you want to carry a firearm safely. Holsters come in different shapes and sizes. Hip holsters, shoulder holsters and ankle holsters are some examples.

Cost: 25\$

CLIPS AND SPEED LOADERS

Semiautomatic handguns, submachine guns, assault rifles and some normal rifles use clips to hold ammunition. Revolvers use a cylinder magazine but if you want to load a revolver faster a speed loader is recommended. With these it is possible to load all the bullets in the cylinder at once.

Cost: Clips cost 19\$ and speed loaders cost 8\$

C-4

This powerful plastic explosive is popular because of its stability. Blasting caps are needed for detonation.

Cost (1/2 pound = 226,5g): 10\$

DYNAMITE

Dynamite is one of the most commonly used explosives. It can be detonated by using either a fuse or a blasting cap.

Cost (Stick): 5\$

HAND GRENADE (Fragmentary)

This is a hand grenade with a three second delay. It causes deadly damage (see the Collateral Damage chapter).

Cost: 30\$

BLASTING CAPS

Simple blasting caps that are activated by an electric current.

Cost: 3\$

FLASHBANG

Besides causing bashing damage (doing half the damage of a hand grenade) this grenade stuns those within its area of effect. Everyone that falls victim to a flashbang gets a -4 modifier for 1D rounds. Movement is halved for the duration.

Cost: 25\$

INCENDIARY GRENADE

This grenade does half the damage of a normal fragmentary grenade but spews burning thermite all over the area of effect. Burning thermite causes Harsh fire damage for 1D/2 rounds to anything it is in contact with. The substance is impossible to put out with water and has to be put out by a fire extinguisher or covered with soil, sand or similar substance. It is also possible to scrape it off, which can be quite painful.

Cost: 35\$

TEARGAS

Anyone sprayed in the face with teargas suffers a -3 modifier lasting 1D+3 rounds. Movement is halved for the duration. A can is good for ten "sprays".

Cost: 15\$

NIGHT GOGGLES/NIGHT SCOPE

Equipped with an IR filter these goggles need no ambient light whatsoever to grant night vision to the wearer. They come with an eight-hour battery life and a 1-x20 magnification. The wearer gets a -2 modifier when trying to discern details in the dark. The goggles have a dampener that compensates for sudden bright light.

Cost: 1300\$

SHOTGUN MICROPHONE

This handheld microphone makes it possible to listen in on a conversation from a three-hundred-meter distance. Direct line of sight is required.

Cost: 100\$

VEHICLES

Vehicles have two stats that are important to the driver: Handling and Speed. Handling is added to the test when a driver has to swerve, ram or do anything else that calls for a test to maneuver the vehicle. Speed has two functions, it adds to tests involving acceleration and it measures the top speed. The speed is a game stat and somewhat abstract but a jet will always outrace a motorcycle no matter what the dice says (you get the point). If a vehicle has zero in speed or handling it just means that it is very poor in these regards, adding nothing to the test.

When trying to catch up or escape, speed is added to the test. If driving through narrow spaces or trying to shake pursuers in heavy traffic, handling is added to the test. Vehicles have armor value (AV) and durability (DU) like any other objects. Don't forget that some vehicles might make it easier to run someone off the road. Using a van to ram a compact car would be detrimental to the one in the compact car and quite "productive" to the one driving the van. Difference in weight can give the driver modifiers (ranging from +1 to -4) when ramming.

It might seem that some vehicles are fragile but always have in mind that a lot of damage that hits a vehicle is more damaging to the "cosmetics" than to the actual structure. Storytellers always have to use reasoning when dealing with these kinds of things. Sometimes an entire clip can be emptied into a vehicle without actually damaging it, only shooting off plating and glass. Likewise can a single sniper bullet to the engine block stop the vehicle dead in its track even though there is lots of durability left.

VEHICLE	HANDLING	SPEED	AV	DU
Compact Car	1	-	3	40
Station Wagon	1	1	3	45
Sports Car	2	3	2	45
Van	1	2	4	50
Bus	-	1	5	55
Truck	-	1	5	60
Motorcycle	2	3	2	35
Jeep	2	2	4	45
Small Boat	3	1	2	25
Speed Boat	3	3	2	35
Yacht	-	2	5	70
Police/Ambulance Helicopter	3	4	5	55
Civilian Helicopter	2	3	3	45
Military Helicopter	3	4	8	55
Commercial Airliner	1	5	8	150
Small Civilian Air Plane	2	4	5	45
Jet	3	7	-	50



CHAPTER 9

HORROR: A SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM

From the journal of Olivia Lake

Darkness. It seems that I always end up in goddamn darkness. When I think back to that military base, I get the chills. The elevator had power but all the lights were out and the battery on my camera was running low. I ended up in some sort of huge underground storage facility. Crates after crates stacked on top of each other from floor to ceiling. A goddamn maze.

As I ventured further toward what I believed to be the center, I saw a light. It came from candles or small fires, I thought. Grunts, sadistic sequels and the odd laughter echoed through the complex. Our murderous pursuers seemed to be enjoying the hunt. I had lost the others, but I was determined to find them. I crept along the edges of the wall, silently, praying for my battery to hold up.

After a while I came across a door. I thanked my lucky star that it was open. Maybe it was a way out, one that I could lead the others to when I found them. They had to be blind as bats down here without a night vision camera. But as I entered I realized that it was a small office space, probably belonged to the quartermaster or something. I swept the camera across the room. When I saw the gangly man sitting in the chair staring at me I almost turned to run, but then I realized that it was a corpse, a skeleton in fact. It was dressed in an old tattered military uniform. Like "War World Two" old. I had wondered what the hell kind of place this was, but saw he had a revolver in his belt. I crept up to the dead soldier and took the weapon plus the shells he had in his belt. I don't know much about guns, but I know enough to check the breech, barrel and cylinder. Clear, locked and loaded. My knife hadn't helped me so far and the fact that I was surrounded by feral, cannibalistic sadists made me think that a gun would be a good idea. I just hoped that it didn't blow up in my face when I fired it. But I would rather go out that way than be raped, killed and eaten...

As I started for the door I heard running steps. They were coming right for me. Fast, but as quietly as I could, I ducked down behind the desk. The running steps stopped just inside the room and someone slowly walked around. Each step took him closer to me. He was breathing heavily. I remember how I had swung my camera up and readied the gun. As the guy stepped into my view, I got ready to cock the hammer and fire. It was Silak. He recoiled as he saw me and almost fired his weapon. He was guided by the faint light of his phone.

I got up and just as I was about to grab him and guide him out, someone jumped him and they both collided with me. I could hear his gun clatter to the floor as I slammed into the desk, a hot pain lancing up my spine. I swung the camera up and saw a huge man ... or manlike thing slamming Silak up against the wall like some rag doll, choking the life out of him. My hands shook as I raised the gun, the camera screen flickering. Cameras, lock picks and surveillance equipment I can handle, but guns not so much. I took a shaky aim and pulled the trigger, only realizing too late that all the other freaks down here would come running at the sound...

In the gloomy and bloodstained world of survival horror fear lurks in every darkened corner. The characters will confront fear of both human and otherworldly origin. Mutilated corpses, crazed madmen, twisted creatures, and the perverted realms of the Coil give rise to chilling dread and unimaginable terror.

When a character is confronted with something horrible a Cool test (referred to as a Fear Roll) has to be made. Each situation has a Fear Score. The higher the Fear Score the worse the reaction is likely to be. Each rolled success reduce the Fear Score by 1. So even if the roll is successful it is likely that the character will react but he will come out of the experience psychologically unharmed. If the Fear Score is reduced to 0 as a result of the Fear Roll there is no forced reaction, but he will probably still be rattled and end up on the first stage on the Fight or Flight monitor. If the roll fails all together the character will be hit with the reaction of the full fear score and also lose the amount of psyche points stated by the situations.

Each situation and encounter is unique and the modifier varies from situation to situation. If the test fails the character suffers the worst possible reaction and loses the amount of psyche points stipulated by the encounter. If he has a low mentality he might even fall victim to a mental disorder if the storyteller finds it fitting. Failure or no failure, the character will always end up on the first stage of Fight or Flight when presented with an encounter. This is the natural response to fear.

The fear reaction is the immediate reaction; after the effect passes the character is free to act as he pleases, but the fear doesn't go away in a blink of an eye; the character will still feel some of it after the effect of the main reaction has ended.

FEAR TABLE

To determine how severely the character reacts the storyteller compares the number of successes scored on the Fear Roll to the Fear Score on the table. Each success reduces the Fear Score by one. Scores above 10 are very unusual and for the most part only minions of darkness may cause these reactions. The immediate reaction is measured in rounds and is often quite extreme, but after the immediate reaction has abided the character will still be rattled for about thirty minutes to an hour.

The reactions are merely suggestions; the best thing is to explain the emotional impact to the players. They may then react, as they believe their characters would. Reaction to horror shouldn't be confined to one measly table but *has* to be enacted. After all, Noctum is a horror *role-playing* game, not a game of statistical horror. The table is best used as a means to keep track of the severity of the reaction. A player acting out his character's reaction gives a far greater experience than simply stating the effect straight off the table. The character might run around frantically instead of freezing up, or even faint as a result of the encounter. Letting the players act out the dreads of horror is the best way to deal with it, and makes for a far more interesting game. If your group is up to it, you may ignore the fear table altogether and the players may react to what they experience through their characters, just using the result of the Fear Roll as a guide.

Under each reaction a specific duration is listed. This shows the amount of time the reaction has a hold of the character.

REACTION	FEAR SCORE
Yells out and curses uncontrollably.	1
Duration: 1 round.	
Yells out and staggers backward.	2
Duration: 1 round.	
Screams aloud and staggers backward.	3
Duration: 1 round.	
Screams uncontrollably, unable to move.	4
Duration: 2 rounds.	
Feels faint and staggers around, suffers a –1 modifier.	5
Duration: 3 rounds.	
Feels faint and staggers around, suffers a –2 modifier.	6
Duration: 3 rounds.	
Becomes weak at the knees, rants uncontrollably. Suffers a –2 modifier.	7
Duration: 4 rounds.	
Falls down ranting and screaming or runs away. Suffers a –2 modifier.	8
Duration: 4 rounds.	
Falls down, unable to do anything else than rant and scream, or runs away in this disoriented state.	9
Duration: 5 rounds.	
Freezes up, unable to move at all.	10
Duration: 5 rounds.	
Falls to the ground in a fetal position, crying and ranting, unable to do anything else.	11
Duration: 10 rounds.	
Falls to the ground in a fetal position, crying and ranting, unable to do anything else, might lose bladder control at this stage and beyond.	12
Duration: 15 rounds.	
Falls down unconscious. may lose hair pigmentation (permanently).	13
Duration: 1D minutes.	
Suffers a heart attack and may lose hair pigmentation (permanently).	14
Suffers a coma and may lose hair pigmentation (permanently).	15

Fear Score vs Psyche Loss: The Fear Score doesn't necessarily need to have anything to do with the Psyche Loss. Fear Score measures how severe the reaction is and how many successes that are needed to avoid losing Psyche Points. The Psyche Point loss measures how severe the negative long term psychological effect is. So even if a situation is shocking and startling it might not shake the character to his core. While some situations that are not frightening in and of themselves might render the character psychologically unhinged.

GAUGING FEAR

The one and same thing can still be an entirely different thing. Modifiers and Fear Scores and the exact reaction may shift. Finding a body might be scary as hell, but having one fall on you is even more horrible.

The storyteller should take proximity and familiarity in consideration when gauging fear. If the character confronts a dreadful creature he will probably be scared out of his mind, but if he confronts the same creature only minutes or hours later he will probably be able to control himself. However, if he runs into it again a couple of days later he might lose control again since his mind hasn't adapted to the dread.

Point being, don't roll for fear every ten seconds. If you roll for every single thing that might scare a character he will go insane pretty quick and it would definitely slow down the game. The dark minions are scary as hell but if the characters frequently run across a specific minion during a game session, they are likely to control themselves since they know what to expect. In the next session, if some time has passed in the game world, they will probably be scared again the first time they confront the creature in the new game session.

Some characters are used to more than others. A librarian is probably going to freak out if a dead body turns up; a homicide detective on the other hand would be relatively calm. So, if someone that is used to dead bodies finds one, a roll would be out of place.

Proximity is also important. If you see a twisted being from afar it would be scary and disturbing but it would not scare the crap out of you, but if you woke up in your bedroom with the same being looming over you, the reaction would be quite different. So always take these things into consideration. Close proximity may incur a -1 to a -3 modifier to the roll, and a +1 to a +2 to the Fear Score. Seeing things from afar might grant a +1 to a +2 modifier to the fear roll and -1 to -2 to the Fear Score.

FOCUS

If someone has suffered a debilitating reaction due to shock they may use Focus in order to regain control. Only one roll is allowed and it can only be made after the first round of shock has passed. The modifier equals the modifier of the Fear Roll. The player rolls for Cool + Focus and each success allows the character to act freely for one round. If he generates more successes than the number of rounds the reaction lasts he has freed himself from the grips of shock.

Talking Sense: *Some reactions caused by fear can paralyze a character or make him rant and rave on the spot. This can last for several rounds, which is very bad when the thing putting a scare on you is a flesh-eating fiend from beyond.*

When this happens another person may scream at, shove and slap the fear-stricken. Every attempt takes one round. Each attempt lets the incapacitated character make a Cool + Focus test with a -2 modifier. If the test is a success the fear loses its hold and he may act normally. If you think the dice rolls take away the focus of the role-play the players should act through this without making the roll (oh yeah, don't slap your co-players for real!).

CIRCUMSTANCES

In the table below some circumstances typical to Noctum and survival horror has been listed. Use these as a guide when determining modifiers and fear scores. Psyche Point Loss shows how many of these the character will lose if the Cool test fails. Fear Score shows the number of successes needed to avoid losing Psyche Points and how severe the reaction is. explains the dice used to determine reaction on the fear table, and of course, modifier states the modifier of the Cool test. There are more circumstances than these but these should provide some guidelines for how to gauge fear. Some circumstances don't cause a reaction on the fear table but still reduce psyche points. There are other ways to lose psyche points that don't really stem from "in-your-face" fear. Being left by one's spouse, having ones company driven to bankruptcy and similar occurrences might also result in loss of psyche points and lead to the path of depression.

CIRCUMSTANCE	PSYCHE POINTS LOSS	FEAR SCORE	MODIFIER
Find a corpse.	1	1	
Find a mutilated corpse.	2	3	
Witness a murder.	1D+1	9	-2
Witness disturbing and unnatural phenomenon.	1D/2	5	-2
Study arch glyphs for an extended period of time.	1D	7	-3
Subjected to torture for several hours.	1D+1	9	-2
Kill another human being in cold blood.	2D	11	-3
Severe car accident.	2	8	
Witness Coil distortions or realms that are particularly alien and horrific.	1D+2	12	-2
Abusing/torturing another.	1D+1	9	-2
Fall victim to sadistic abuse.	1D+2	10	-3
Witness the murder of a loved one.	2D+4	11	-4

Example: As he sneaks down a dark back alley Victor feels something wet and sticky drip down on his face. He looks up. A skinned and decomposing corpse hangs from a fire escape. He barely got time to notice it before the horrid thing falls. It lands in front of him with a wet thump, spraying him with stale blood and decomposing chunks of flesh. The storyteller calls for a Fear Roll. Victor has a Cool of 3. The storyteller tells him that the modifier is -2, which gives him 4 dice to roll. Finding a mutilated corpse only has 3 in Fear Score but as it falls down, almost landing on him and sprays Victor with viscera the storyteller decides to up the score. He gives it a Fear Score of 6 and a Psyche Point loss of 1D/2. The player of Victor rolls his 4 dices and manages to score two successes. This takes the fear score down to 4 as each rolled success lowers the Fear Score by one. The listed reaction for Fear Score 4 is: "Screams uncontrollably, unable to move. Duration: 2 rounds." The storyteller decides that Victor also will vomit due to the revolting putrid spatter. The storyteller determined that the Psyche Point loss is 1D/2. He rolls the dice and the results is 3, rounded up the result is 2, resulting in a loss of 2 Psyche Points. So Victor loses 2 Psyche Points and the player acts out the reaction of his character.

CHAPTER 10

THE BROKEN MIND

From the journal of Olivia Lake

We survived our encounter at the base and gotten the hell out of there, but Victor lost it just a few hours later. Of all of us, he'd gotten the worst of it. He was hospitalized after being attacked by those shadows back at the warehouse, and was also the only one to get a good look at that thing in the elevator back at Fort Dwyer. And now they, whomever "they" were, had killed his ex-wife and threatened his daughter. He found his ex strung up with a meat hook in her apartment. After that he had slipped into a near-catatonic state. We couldn't do much other than put him up in an institution. Silak had a contact who signed Victor in under a false name (Richard Treley). We thought it better not to broadcast his whereabouts to our pursuers. As I am writing this, Victor has been institutionalized for a week. I hope he snaps out of it, we need him. Personally, I feel my own mind succumbing to paranoia. Every shadow and every stranger scares me. I don't know from where the next attack will come. I've gotten my hands on some pills, they keep me afloat for now. Caleb is keeping track of Victor's progress by hacking the hospital archives. From what I can discern, his mind is badly broken. Huxley is nowhere to be found. I fear the worst; that she died back there at Forth Dwyer.

Facility: Mount Glass Psychiatric Institution
Doctor: Jessica Pascal
Patient: Richard Treley
Patient ID Number: 894-D214

Mr. Treley was brought to us in a catatonic state after finding the mutilated body of his ex-wife. However, this psychological response is a very unusual reaction in cases like these. Mr. Treley has no prior history of mental illness or instability, though he has received therapy for claustrophobia and suffered an abusive childhood. It took three days before he became communicative and during these days we had him on an IV drip in order to get nutrients into him. We put him haloperidol just in case the catatonia was the result of a psychotic episode.

During our therapy sessions I have discovered that he has created a paranoid delusion which entails, quote, "shadows from the other side" which are out to get him. He was physically attacked some weeks ago and hospitalized as a result. According to the medical record, he had been attacked by a pack of aggressive wild dogs (though no canine hair or saliva was found and the wounds weren't fully consistent with a dog attack). In his mind this attack is connected to the murder of his ex-wife. He perceived these dogs as living shadows that are controlled by "the dark ones." Mr. Treley believes that the attack on himself as well as the murder of his ex-wife are attempts at stopping him from investigating the truth.

It is my belief that Mr. Treley has created this delusion as a defense mechanism, as he does not possess the ability to accept that terrible things can happen randomly and without reason. As an ex-police officer he is used to confronting horrible crimes and this delusion gives him a sense of control. My recommendation is that we keep him on the antipsychotics. It is clear to me that he has slipped into a full-blown psychosis focused around paranoid delusions. I also recommend that we put him on lithium as he suffers from a severe depression that might lead to suicidal thoughts and tendencies. It is quite possible that he will fully recover after some weeks or months. He has no prior mental problems (apart from the claustrophobia which doesn't factor in here) and the his mental state was brought on by a recent string of external traumas.



The human mind is a marvelous construct indeed. It lets us invent, fantasize, act, talk, feel and ponder. However, when the mind is overwhelmed by too much horror, trauma and stress, it folds. All that which made it fantastic turns painfully inward, creating the most dreadful hobgoblins of madness.

Noctum is a game of dread and horror, and the creatures, and realms, that exist in the game universe may break and twist the minds of the characters. Depression, delusions and frightening psychosis is but a small part of the madness that might strike down upon the characters confined to this dark and morose world.

MENTALITY

Mentality represents the general state of mind and mental health of a character (not counting the weaknesses). As mentality drops, the character will become more depressed and more prone to fall victim to mental illness, and more easily succumb to his weaknesses.

When confronted with something unrelenting and disturbing the character has to make a Cool test. If this fails he loses an amount of psyche points indicated by the occurrence. When psyche points are depleted in one level, the mentality drops to the next level, leaving the character worse off.

The different stages of mentality explain the overall mood and mental state of the character. Each new stage will affect the character and the player needs to adapt his role-play. As stated in the explanation of the different stages below, hardship and problems will become harder to deal with when mentality drops. This doesn't mean that the character won't handle them, but they become more careful and withdrawn. Let's say that a character in full mental health would move fast through a dark derelict house in search of a foe. If his mentality drops low he would become more and more careful. He would walk slowly, feeling a sense of foreboding each time he has to cut a corner. Making decisions of any kind will become harder as he starts to obsess about the consequences of each decision.

The negative scores listed on the mentality stage Stressed, and beyond, represent the amount of negative modifiers a character will suffer on Cool tests and social skills. Intimidation (and sometimes Interrogation) is unaffected since the character has no problem threatening other people. The descriptions of the mentality levels give a general take on an individual's mental state, not taking weaknesses into account.

Example: Huxley has a mentality of 10, making her Peaceful. She has a Cool of 2. This gives her 4 psyche points on each level of mentality. A serial killer has kidnapped her, and as she is bound she cannot fight back. During an entire night he tortures her. In the end she manages to escape but the storyteller says that the experience was unfathomably horrible. He says that Huxley must make a Cool test. She rolls the dice and fails.

The storyteller deems that she will lose 1D+3 psyche points. The result of the roll is 9. Huxley drops from Peaceful to Uptight. Her mental state has become more volatile and she is more susceptible to mental disorders. Quite understandable after what she went through.

MENTALITY		
● Peaceful	- 40	P
● Composed	- 36	S
● Uptight	- 32	Y
● Anxious	- 28	C
● Worried	- 24	H
● Stressed	- 20	E
● Strained	- 16	P
● Disturbed	- 12	O
● Anguished	- 8	I
● Tormented	- 4	N
		T
		S



MENTALITY		
○ Peaceful	-	P
○ Composed	-	S
● Uptight	- 32	Y
● Anxious	- 28	C
● Worried	- 24	H
● Stressed	- 20	E
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		T
		S

PEACEFUL

Life is good and you view it like anyone else. You have no real problem and can deal with hardship in a calm manner. You are active and have a normal social life.

COMPOSED

Most of the time you are a happy camper but sometimes your mind can get solemn. Once in a while you have small episodes of cynicism and feelings of worry. You have a normal social life but hardship may put you off somewhat.

UPTIGHT

Life can be harsh but you handle it. You are always somewhat worried and can never fully relax. Your social life is active, but sometimes you choose to stay away from company since you feel depressed. You hesitate to deal with problems since you feel put down, but eventually you deal with them.

ANXIOUS

Life is harsh but most of the time you cope, but every now and again you get the feeling that the world hates you. You are constantly worried that something awful will happen, and you think even more misery will afflict you. You go out and have a good time sometimes but you are never fully content, or relaxed, since you are way too anxious. Hardship is something you shun and some time may pass before you can muster up the energy to deal with problems. People around you often ask how you are doing.

WORRIED

Life is pretty bad and you are quite prone to the idea that the world is against you. You aren't just worried that bad things are going to happen; you *know* they will. Half the time asked to go out and have a good time you decline. Whenever you do go out for some recreation you feel a deep-rooted worry and fear, which makes you jumpy. Hardships and problems make you sick to your stomach since you are afraid you won't be able to handle them. However, most of the time you do handle them, but sometimes you turn your back to them. Those close to you often ask how you are doing and they suspect that you are depressed.

STRESSED (-1)

Things are really getting bad, and you have a hard time looking at any circumstance in a positive light, the glass is always half empty. You are convinced that the world is against you. Every waking hour you are haunted by an ominous feeling that something terrible is going to happen at any moment. When someone asks you to go out to have a good time you decline half of the time. When you do go out to "relax", you only feel out of place and anxious.

Problems, big or small, are a huge dilemma. You have a hard time doing anything about them; even paying the bills may cause you enormous stress. It is obvious to those close to you that you are mentally unstable and depressed, and they often try to urge you to get some professional help. If you have a job it is possible you will get fired or have been granted a leave of absence on the count of personal problems.

STRAINED (-1)

Life is something you almost could do without, and you are incapable of seeing anything positive. The world is a dark and unforgiving place that always torments you. Mostly you decline any offers involving going out to have a good time. When you go out with friends you are a burden to them, as you mostly sit in a corner staring or crying. Casual acquaintances will shun you, as you are too depressed, weird and moody to be around. On the other hand, you don't really care since you are quite content with shielding yourself from others.

Most of the time you ignore problems and large parts of everyday life seem to pass you by in a haze of nothingness. You seldom clean, check the mail and your personal hygiene is suffering since you have a hard time finding any motivation to shower or brush your teeth. It is obvious to anyone that something is terribly wrong and that you need professional help. The thought of suicide lingers in the back of your mind from time to time.

DISTURBED (-2)

Life is a pitch-black existence without any solace. You can barely stand existence and the weight of the world is heavily painful. You suffer from anxiety and dark thoughts twenty-four-seven. You never go out unless you have to, and you keep your social contacts at a minimum. To socialize with other people can be a real problem, since you can sound outright aggressive and erratic when people mention your state of mind. Life passes you by and you have no real conception of dates and times. You almost never clean or take care of your personal hygiene. You often think about committing suicide, especially when you try to sleep and you are alone with your thoughts. Whenever you do sleep it is only for short periods of time. You might also suffer from slight malnutrition since you forget to eat from time to time. You are a wreck, and that fact is obvious to anyone that lays eyes on you.

ANGUISHED (-3)

You aren't entirely sure why you are alive at all. You seldom sleep or eat. Personal hygiene, cleaning and day-to-day life is never dealt with. You have no idea whatsoever what date or time it is. You spend most of your time disoriented and aren't really quite sure of what goes on in your surroundings. Suicide is constantly on your mind and without help you risk taking your own life or die from starvation.

TORMENTED (-4)

You are probably a violent madman or a raving lunatic, sometimes both. Your speech is slurred and consists of an incoherent ranting; you might be catatonic in which case you don't do much of anything. You hardly eat or sleep and have no conception of your surroundings, dates or times. If left unattended you will kill yourself, or die from starvation or exposure on one of your crazed walkabouts. This is the worst stage of mentality; sometimes a character is unable to return from it and is in that case lost.

REGAINING PSYCHE POINTS

If the character hasn't lost more than fifty percent of his psyche points (not lower than Worried on their mentality) he regains one psyche point a week. If he has lost more than fifty percent he only regains 1 a month. If a character only has twenty percent left (a mentality of Anguished or less) professional help is required to regain any.

Professional help means one of two things: Hospitalization in a mental asylum or psychoanalysis. Professional help can be used even if the character is capable of slow and natural recuperation.

If the storyteller feels generous he might grant that a complete stage of mentality is restored (if the character hasn't passed the stage of Worried) during a twenty-four-hour period directly after an incident, provided nothing else happens that may cause loss of psyche points. This system is good to use if the characters have been in a really harrowing experience and the storyteller doesn't want them to lose their marbles just yet.

Option: Buying Mentality

If you wish, you may let players spend experience points to buy back mentality, in addition to the other ways of regaining mentality. This should only be allowed if a character has dropped to a Strained mentality or lower. The cost is set at 5 UP per mentality level (filling up PSY fully per bought level), and the character shouldn't be allowed to reach above an Anxious mentality using this system. In a way this can actually add to the gritty feel of the game. Instead of being able to fully concentrate on learning new skills all the time, the character has to focus on his inner turmoil and by force of will overcome some of his inner demons.

HOSPITALIZATION

Hospitalization is effective if the asylum is a good one; bad ones can actually make people worse. Hospitals have two stats that are important: Treatment and Environment. Treatment shows how good the psychological remedies and sessions are, while Environment shows how well organized the treatment plan is. A hospital with good Treatment and poor Environment will make it hard for



patients to get the attention they need, but when they do the sessions really help. On the other hand, a hospital with poor Treatment and good Environment lets the patients work a lot with their problems, but the Treatment they receive is poor, making it harder for them to get better. Environment ranges from -4 to +4. These stats are the positive or negative modifiers a character receives when doing his fortnightly Cool test.

Treatment is divided into the following numbers: -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3. When in the positive the Treatment shows how many psyche points a character can get back per rolled success. When Treatment is 0 the player don't get to roll, the hospital is just too poor. Some mental hospitals are so bad that they are detrimental to the patient. This occurs when the Treatment score is in the negative. Not only is the character incapable of getting better, he actually loses a number of psyche points equal to the negative value if his roll fails. He is also incapable of making any natural recovery if his roll fails while in a facility with a negative Treatment.

Every two weeks the character is staying in a mental hospital a player makes a Cool test. As mentioned, the hospital's Environment score is factored into the test determining the final modifier. If the test is successful he regains an amount of psyche points equal to the Treatment level of the hospital per rolled success. If the test fails nothing happens. If the character is in a hospital with poor Treatment (which reduces psyche points) a failure on the test indicates that he loses the amount of points stated under the Treatment (-3, -2 or -1).

Example: *After her encounter with the serial killer, Huxley soon runs into an even worse problem. Several Wossals, loathsome and unnatural creatures, attack her. She survives but the harrowing experience takes its toll on her mentality. Her mentality is reduced to Worried. She can still regain psyche points by herself at a slow rate but she is unstable and wishes to be hospitalized for her own good. She still has sense enough to understand this.*

The hospital has an Environment of +2 and a Treatment that lets her regain 2 psyche points per success rolled on her fortnightly Cool test. After a two weeks of hospitalization

she gets to make a Cool test. During these two weeks she has regained 2 psyche points naturally, as she is still capable of doing so. She had lost a total of 18 points, now she needs to regain a total of 14 to get well. She makes a Cool test and gets a +2 modifier due to the Environment score. All in all she gets to roll 6 dices (4 for her Cool and +2 modifier for the Environmental score. She scores 2 successes. This allows her to get back a total of 6 psyche points during a two week period. She regained 2 naturally and she regained 4 from the treatment.

PSYCHOANALYSIS

For psychoanalysis to be effective the patient has to attend two one-hour sessions a week. At the end of the second session the psychiatrist makes a test using his rank in Psychology. The psychiatrist gets a modifier equal to the one stated on the mentality stage the patient is currently on. If successful the patient regains 2 extra psyche points that week.

It is also possible to break the mind of an unwilling patient. In these cases the psychiatrist has to make a contested test using his rank in Psychology pitted against the patient's Cool. The patient gets a modifier to his Cool score equal to the modification stated on his current mentality stage. If the psychiatrist wins, the patient is not only unable to regain psyche points naturally that week, he also loses 2 points.

MENTAL DISORDERS

Beyond severe depression, a character can suffer from mental disorders as a result of horrible encounters and experiences. Some weaknesses are mental disorders such as OCD and Paranoia. If a character has such a weakness from the start it is too deep-rooted in his mind, and he will probably never be free from it. On the other hand, some weaknesses can be gained as a mental disorder during play, and these are treatable. You may give any kind of weakness to a character as a result of horrible experiences if it suits the gameplay. A character that has been kidnapped by a serial killer might become paranoid or develop a drinking problem as a result. If a creature of darkness takes a particular interest in a character he might gain the weakness Dark Presence. Some are treatable, while at other times a whole story might center on a character trying to find a way to get rid of a new weakness. The choice is yours.

Beyond this, there are even more severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia, hallucinations and psychosis. Mental disorders have two vital stats: Strength and Regression.

Regression is the score that needs to be reduced. When Regression is reduced to zero, the mental disorder has been cured. Strength determines the modifier on the Cool roll.

Some disorders are only temporary, lasting from an hour to forty-eight hours. The permanent disorders cannot be remedied without professional help.

If hospitalized, the player makes a roll modified by the Strength of the disorder using his character's Cool every two weeks. He adds the hospital's Environment modifier to the roll. Regression Points are reduced by an amount equal to the hospital's Treatment level per rolled success. When all Regression Points are depleted the mental disorder is cured. A separate roll is made for regaining Psyche Points and for curing disorders every two weeks in-game time.

Psychiatrist can cure disorders as well. The psychiatrist makes a test, using his rank in Psychology modified by the Strength of the disorder. A successful test reduces the Regression Points by two in the patient. As with the restoration of Psyche Points, two one-hour sessions per week are needed and the test is done at the end of each week's last session. A separate test is made for curing the disorder and another is made for restoring psyche points.

Example: *Life has been treating Victor really poorly and he is hospitalized, suffering from a psychosis. The hospital he is in has an Environment of 0 and a Treatment of 2. His psychosis has Strength 2 and 15 regression points. Victor has a Cool of 4, and he has no negative modifiers due to low mentality, since he has only dropped to Worried.*

Two weeks pass within the walls of Shadow Gleam Mental Asylum and it is time for Victor to see if he can start the healing process. He makes a roll, pitting his Cool of 3 against the psychosis Strength of 2. Since the hospital has zero Environment rank so this doesn't affect the roll. But the Strength of the psychosis is 2, which gives him a -2 negative modifier, reducing his 6 dice to 4 on the Cool roll. Victor's player rolls the dice. He scores 2 successes. Victor is successful. The Treatment score is 2, which reduces the regression points of the disorder with 4, leaving them at 11 since each rolled success reduced the Regression Points by the Treatment score of the hospital. If Victor is lucky with his rolls, he will be cured in a couple of weeks. A separate test is made to see if he regains Psyche Points.

MEDICATION

There are millions of different medications used to mend depression and mental illness. To make it easier Noctum has divided them into two groups: Antidepressants and Neuroleptics.

Antidepressants temporarily restore Psyche Points, making the life of a depressed person bearable. Each dose of antidepressant temporarily counts the character as being one step higher on the Mentality ladder. This only lasts for twenty-four hours and medication has to be taken continuously every twenty-four hours. More than three doses per day negate the effect and causes mild lithium poisoning. Antidepressants have side effects: dry mouth, headache, light sensitivity, mood swings, abdominal pains, reduction in affect, drop in libido and blisters among others. There are many more but these should provide some idea. Each dose gives one side effect, and anyone taking two doses gets a -1 modifier to all tests while those



taking three doses per twenty four hours suffer a -2modifier to all tests. This is because they becomes sluggish and a bit disoriented.

Neuroleptics diminish the effect of mental disorders. Each dose of neuroleptics reduces the Strength of the disorder by 1 (reducing it to 0 at the most), making it easier to overcome. A person medicating may make a Cool test when his disorder tries to take over. If successful the person may tell the real world apart from his delusions to a certain extent. He may still hear voices, feel watched, and see things but he gains the ability to tell these things apart from reality. For example, a person in a fugue may try to resist a sudden onset by making a Cool test. Repressed memories on the other hand cannot be recollected using medication. The same side effect applies to neuroleptics as with antidepressants with the possible addition of ticks, severe salivation, light sensitivity and slurred speech. All medication needs to be ingested every twenty-four hours to be effective.

SUFFERANCE

Most of the time when a character fails a Cool test to withstand a straining and dreadful situation he only loses psyche points, but if the storyteller deems it fitting he may gain a mental disorder. A low mentality increases the risk. As a rule of thumb, the storyteller may roll 1D to determine if a disorder is gained if it suits the situation. The table below shows the risk of gaining a disorder depending on the character's mentality. It is uncommon to have more than two or three disorders in any one time, and the storyteller should also be careful. Disorders make a character hard to play, and this should be taken into consideration. If appropriate, roll 1D to determine if the character gains a disorder. The storyteller decides which disorder is the most suitable depending on the circumstances. Keep in mind that you don't have to give the character a disorder, but when appropriate you can use the table as a guideline. If you roll a result within the range of your Mentality rating the character will suffer a mental disorder.

Peaceful: None

Composed: None

Uptight: 1

Anxious: 1

Worried: 1-2

Stressed: 1-3

Strained: 1-4

Disturbed: 1-5

Anguished: 1-6

Tormented: 1-7

Example: Gavin has a Worried mentality and he is confronted by a Mendroloth in its true form. The sight of the perverted and horrid creature calls for a Cool test. The test fails. First he loses an amount of Psyche Points, reducing him to a Stressed mentality. Gavin has been through a lot and the storyteller says that he stands a chance of developing a mental disorder. The storyteller rolls 1D, the result is 3. A result of 1 to 3 means that Gavin is afflicted with a mental disorder since he has a Stressed mentality. The storyteller tells the player that Gavin now suffers from hallucinations where he sees the foul creature lurking in every corner of his eye. As the final judge of regression and Strength, the storyteller gives the disorder Strength 2 and 16 Regression Points.

THE DISORDERS

There are many more disorders than listed here, but the ones most essential to the game will be provided. As mentioned before, many weaknesses may be used as disorders as well. Paranoia, OCD and Phobias are a good example. The Strength of disorders range from 0 to 4 depending on their severity. Regression Points range from 10, being quite mild, to as much as 30 for the most severe. The disorders deemed as temporary only lasts from half an hour to forty-eight hours.

TICS

Tics are a somatic response to a mental reaction or drug stimuli. Tics cause involuntary spasms in the facial muscles and limbs. The person afflicted gets a -1 modifier on all social tests (except intimidation) and tests involving a steady hand. Tics are often the result of an extreme nervous or agitated state if it isn't a result of drug use. If it is drug related, the tics won't stop until forty-eight hours after the individual has stopped taking the drug.

Type: Temporary

FUGUE

Dissociative fugue is a rare mental disorder that stems from extreme trauma and shock. The victims are prone to shut down their conscious mind and let the dormant subconscious take over. They often drop everything and leave. They run on autopilot and can perform most actions during this state. Usually they take long walks or drives. Sometimes they try to find answers to a repressed memory in this state. A person in a fugue isn't very talkative and the speech is often incoherent; the behavior resembles that of a sleepwalker.

Someone in a fugue may write down erratic notes and engage in odd behavior, such as building a tower of chairs in their living room, or walk into a store to buy the oddest things. The afflicted have no recollection of actions taken during a fugue, and an episode lasts anywhere from a couple of minutes to months. Usually it lasts a few hours. The storyteller decides when the fugue takes over and what the character does during this state. This in itself can lead to interesting and terrifying stories.

Type: Permanent

HALLUCINATIONS

Hallucinations consist of auditory and visual fragments that don't exist. These images and sounds are a product of the mind, and the very same thing that led to the disorder often inspires how these phantoms express themselves. Everything from intense fear to prolonged exposure to a hostile environment that breeds paranoia may be the cause.

A person that suffers from hallucinations is incapable of telling these phantoms of the mind apart from reality. It doesn't matter how unbelievable they are, or if people around them point out that they don't exist. Hallucinations are as real to the disturbed as reality is to you when it comes to how they are perceived.

Hallucinations come and go. Sometimes they are frequent, at other times days can pass by before they reappear. They can last from a blink of an eye to hours. Contrary to popular belief this disorder cannot make a person do anything. They can hear voices and see the most dreadful creatures or dead friends that order them to do things but these apparitions cannot force them to do anything. However, hallucinations can still be dangerous as they can change the appearance of people. Driving can be especially dangerous. The person still reacts to what he experiences and violent or erratic behavior is a by-product of these reactions.

Beyond creating shapes and voices, hallucinations can distort entire surroundings in the eyes of the afflicted. Also, they can be more low-key, making letters in a book spell totally different words than they really do. The exact nature of the hallucinations is up to the storyteller but often they are inspired by a character's fear and recent traumatic experiences.

Type: Most often permanent, temporary on rare occasions.

MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER (MPD)

MPD is an extremely rare disorder; some psychiatrists don't even believe it exists. MPD creates an alternate personality, which is adept at handling traumas and uncomfortable truths that the real personality is incapable of dealing with.

Sometimes the real person is aware of the alternate personality but most often he is unaware. The psychological change runs deep and the alternate personality may be left-handed while the original person is right-handed. Speech pattern, movement pattern, blood pressure, accent, tone of voice and even eyesight may differ between the personalities.

An alternate personality isn't by definition evil or dangerous. Alternate personalities often try to live out their lives in peace. Sometimes, however, the other personality might have been created by dark desires that the original personality won't admit to having. In these cases the other person may be a purely sadistic and wicked individual indeed.

On some rare occasions the two personalities can speak; if the one suffering from the disorder also suffers from either schizophrenia or hallucinations, he can actually see and touch the other personality. This of course is just a trick of the mind. The alternate personality is capable of harming the person under these circumstances. Onlookers would only see a disturbed individual beating the crap out of his sorry self but in the mind of the disturbed, the alternate personality hits him.

If MPD is cured the other personality lies dormant. If the disorder were to return, it is most likely that the same alternate personality reappears. Most of the time no memories, except the odd flashback, remain of the other personalities activities.

The storyteller has total control and decides when the alternate he or she emerges and has to construct this individual. Aptitudes and skills might differ somewhat. Depending on gameplay, the player may or may not be allowed to play the other personality when it takes over.

Type: Permanent

REPRESSION

Repression, or crypto amnesia, is a phenomenon that stems from consciously forgotten information (and sometimes emotions). When things get way too harsh and traumatic the mind may deliberately suppress and hide the memory of the incident deep in the subconscious. A couple of hours or a day, at the most, may be repressed. Sometimes bits and pieces from an incident go missing. The person may remember everything, but an hour might have gone missing. This hour was probably the most intense and traumatic one.

Repression can be linked to fugues and hallucinations, as repressed memory may manifest itself through actions taken during a fugue or things experienced through hallucinations.

Type: Most often temporary, permanent on rare occasions.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

The name itself originates from the Greek language and literary means “split mind”, which describes this disorder quite well. Schizophrenia is often a very dangerous disorder. First of all, the person suffering from it experiences hallucinations. These hallucinations don't need to have any connection to reality. The other difference between schizophrenic hallucinations, and “normal” ones, is that a schizophrenic's state of mind makes him susceptible to commands and suggestions given by these phantoms. The world is viewed through a dim and distorted sheet of glass from the schizophrenic's point of view.

Schizophrenics are prone to construct intricate fantasy worlds that they fully believe to be true, and they disconnect from reality. A schizophrenic's attempt to cure himself or save the world also poses a danger. In his mind, something else is responsible for his horrible prophecies, voices and bizarre experiences or the peril of the world. Maybe an object needs to be destroyed, a specific person has to be killed, or he might even think that he needs to travel through time, jumping from the twentieth floor to reach the velocity needed to pass through a time portal. Needless to say, a schizophrenic without medication can pose a threat to others and himself. He also has a tendency to be suspicious. The exact nature of the world a character in the grip of a schizophrenic episode experience is left up to the storyteller. Without medication, schizophrenia is a constant state that only shifts in its severity.

Episodes of disorganized ranting, abstract and chaotic thoughts, and shorter catatonic states are also common. The cause of schizophrenia is thought to be genetic, but schizophrenic episodes can be induced through severe trauma and confrontations with the atrocious minions of the unknown as well.

Type: Permanent

PSYCHOSIS

A psychosis is a form of paranoid delusion. A person suffering from the condition becomes extremely paranoid and thinks the world is out to get him. Beyond the paranoia lie subtle hallucinations and the constant feeling of being watched.

Psychotic people often feel as if they are being controlled by an external force, and may perform the most crazed acts, actually having no real control since their own mind has broken down, leaving it up to demented fantasies to have their way.

Psychotics are often violent since they view most people as enemies. A psychotic believes the whole world has

conspired against him, and thoroughly believes that he is in hostile territory or hunted by those trying to kill him.

The severity of the condition varies and often a psychotic can be quite lucid and fully functional in society. However, when he suffers a psychotic break it is an entirely different story.

Long periods of drug use are the most common cause of psychoses but it might also be the first steps towards schizophrenia. Characters with the weakness Paranoid are more prone to fall victim to permanent forms of psychosis. Drunks and Drug Addicts are more prone to fall victim to psychosis altogether.

Type: Permanent or Temporary

HYSTERIA

This is more a state of mind than a disorder. Simply put, hysteria is the inability to control any emotions whatsoever. Fright turns to panic, anger turns to uncontrollable rage and maddening rants, crying turns into hypoventilation and tear-drenched panting, amusement turn to uncontrollable breathless laughter, and a wish to explain something turns into a manic rant. Even worse, there are no lines between the emotions and their expression.

A person suffering from hysteria can be screaming of dread while trying to explain something important, laughing frantically at something he found the slightest amusing. This is the raw and unadulterated face of emotional upheaval created by too much psychological strain. If given time, the person can calm down somewhat but the smallest thing can bring the hysteria back as long as the individual suffers from it. A person under the influence of hysteria can never be brought down below level 1 on the Fight or Flight monitor, and he is incapable of falling asleep unless he passes out from exhaustion or is given a sedative.

Type: Temporary

DARKNESS & INSANITY

People who have been afflicted with insanity as a result of encounters with the minions of darkness, or numerous realms of the Coil, within a short period of time may have their insanity linked with the dark energies. This applies to hallucinations, psychosis and schizophrenia.

When this happens real visions from the realms of the Coil, or things perceived through a creature's senses, are mixed in with the delusions. The afflicted can see how the world ripples and shifts when a Coil distortion is close. They can hear voices passing from beyond the Coil into our reality, or look upon the world through the eyes of a dark minion. It can be quite disturbing to suddenly see oneself from a distance, hearing heartbeats, frantic

breathing and growls from the creature watching you from afar. This sometimes lets the creature see through the eyes of the character as well which can become a problem when it comes to escaping from it. When the mental disorder is cured, the link is severed.

This commonly happens to people who have been in close proximity, to dark minions or traveled the Coil to some extent. However, a Stressed or even lower mentality is often required. The storyteller may use this rule as he sees fit, but this tool shouldn't be employed too often or on a regular basis since it might become watered down.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

When humans are confronted with real danger and fear, their instincts kick in. Adrenalin rushes through their blood and endorphins help to diminish the pain. These reactions are a memory from times of old. In our past we lived in caves hunting prey to survive. The pure survival instinct still lingers in our minds, ready to muster up hidden strength and resources. These reactions are called Fight or Flight.



Anything from fear to injury can cause us to react in this manner. Our physical prowess peaks, but our intellect, and analytical thought processes, become impaired. A mother who lifts the front end of a burning car from her child's lifeless body is a good example of these instincts.

Some of the reactions are as follows.

- The pupils dilate to heighten our sense of sight.
- Heart rate goes way up and the veins expand to supply the muscles with more blood, making them work harder.
- Fat from the cells is released to provide instantaneous energy.
- The respiratory system maximizes, letting us take in more air and scream louder to ward off enemies.
- The outer blood vessels shrink to minimize superficial bleeding.
- Endorphins and adrenaline are released to numb pain and increase strength.
- Intellect, judgment and reasoning drops rapidly, so the mind can focus on the imminent threat without being distracted by thoughts of morale and consequences.
- Partial memory loss due to the rapid biochemical changes in the brain.

There are two definitive reactions in this state of mind: Fight or Flight.

Fight makes a person focus on incapacitating, killing or otherwise attack a foe or an object. If it is a foe the person focuses on neutralizing the threat. In some cases, an object might be the target, such as a bolted door the character needs to destroy in order to escape a burning building.

Flight focuses on getting away. The individual will get rid of every obstacle in the way, but attacks are only a side effect of the actual escape. When in flight mode the objective is to get as far away as possible from an imminent threat.

There are five stages of Fight or Flight starting at one. The character can move seamlessly between stages depending on the surrounding stress. A stage higher than three is unusual, and for a person to go beyond that the situation really has to be extreme.

On stage one and two, a character still maintains his rationale somewhat, but when he reaches stage three he has to choose a reaction. Fight or Flight. The choice is his.

STRESS TOLERANCE

The amount of stress or fear required to get the adrenalin flowing is very personal depending on what kind of personality the character has. A lawyer without any violent history or tendencies may enter stage one if he passes individuals in a darkened alley that look suspicious, while a scarred war veteran would not flinch in the same situation. The storyteller has to decide what goes as every character is different. A cold-blooded mob enforcer would not be fazed if a murder occurred in front of him. If on the other hand the victim was a child, and the enforcer never harms children, he would react.

Fight or Flight is basically a diceless system, which allows the storyteller to regulate the fear and heart rate of the characters to some extent. This, in and of itself, is good for the storytelling as players can get a better understanding of what their characters are going through, as their heart rate and adrenaline goes up. Some examples of what might make a character enter the first stage of Fight or Flight are listed below.

- Five to ten rounds of violence.
- Someone close to you betrays your trust in an unforgivable manner.
- Falls victim to a surprise attack or ambush.
- Someone you love is in grave danger.
- Loss of deadly hit points.
- Caught in a situation that might have a lethal outcome, trapped in a burning building or caught in a sinking car.
- Witness to appalling acts that you find morally detestable such as rape, murder, or aggravated assault.
- Someone tells you terrible and tragic news, such as the death of someone close to you.
- Made privy of something terrible that stands to have dire consequences that will affect you.
- Extended periods of mental stress. Being followed for several blocks by threatening parties, spending several minutes among people that might kill you.
- Witnessing unexplained and mind-boggling phenomena.
- When forced to make a Cool test to withstand shock and horror.
- Severely affected by a mental illness, frightening hallucinations, psychotic episodes, or hysteria.
- Hurting someone physically and severely.

Example: Victor sits in a quiet, and off-the-beaten-path diner, enjoying a cup of coffee. All of a sudden a man kicks in the door and fires a shotgun blast at the waitress. The storyteller tells the player that his character is now on the first stage of Fight or Flight, and it won't take much to bring him into stage two.

Example 2: Silak is researching old manuscripts in search of information regarding an ancient amulet. Suddenly he comes across a piece of text that tells about the demon Tirogas. This creature is said to live inside the very relic Silak possesses. In fear he backs away from the table, glaring at the relic. Silak believes in demons, and the storyteller tells the player that the knowledge his character just came across was enough to make his heart race. He is now on the first stage of Fight or Flight.

EVEN MORE ADRENALIN

When a character has arrived at the first stage, more stress and fear may push him further up the stages. To go from stage one to stage two doesn't take all that much. Usually this will happen if the stressful situation continues; but to go from stage two, to stage three, requires a bit more.

Most people never go beyond stage two, since this is a state of mind a violent brawl may induce. Even a drawn-out firefight or other confrontations (against human adversaries that is) with potentially lethal outcome aren't likely to push a character further up the stages. However, if the character gets hurt (deadly damage) or witness a friend being hurt during these circumstances, he is likely to reach stage three. When this happens the player has to choose how his character will react: Fight or Flight.

After a character has chosen a reaction he rarely changes to the opposite. If he wishes to do so, it costs him 1D/2 (minimum 1) psyche points, since it puts a terrible strain on the mind.

Stages four or five are extremely rare, even under extreme circumstances. Only the most outrageous of events may push a character to these levels of adrenalin-drenched panic or rage. People suffering from an acute mental disorder are more prone to enter this extreme state of mind.

TIMEFRAME

After the immanent threat is gone, the character drops one stage every five to fifteen minutes (up to the storyteller). If the character has entered stage three, or higher, he might suffer from hysteria a couple of minutes after he has rid himself of the primary Fight or Flight reaction.

Levels four and five put a tremendous strain on the mind and body, and after leaving one of these stages the character suffers a -2 modifier to all tests. This lasts for twenty-four hours. If a character enters level four or five again within this time period, he passes out afterwards and is unconscious for 1D hours as a result of the strain.

THE STAGES

Fight or Flight consists of five stages: Agitated, Upset, Enraged, Rabid and Berserk. Each level affects the character differently, adding to physical Aptitudes and an exceedingly decreasing ability to reason.

The increase doesn't affect other aptitudes, so a heightened Brawn won't grant the character increased hit points, and a heightened Cool won't increase the amount of psyche points, and so forth. And any increase in Brawn is added as a modifier to all rolls having to do with running as well. But there are some drawbacks. When stage two has been reached the character gets a negative modifier. This modifier applies to every test that doesn't involve physical actions of movement or raw power. The modifier would not apply on an athletics test if the character was climbing or jumping, but if he were trying to throw something with accuracy, or engage in any other athletic move that would require precision and concentration, it would apply. Shooting, driving and everything that requires concentration, a steady hand or afterthought is subjected to this modifier. Adrenaline makes the hands shake and dulls the wit.

From level two and upward the tolerance for pain increases. From level two to three the negative wound modifier is counted as one less. From level four to five it counts as two less. A character on stage three or higher seldom passes out as a result of a wound; he is more likely to be dazed on a failed Brawn test.

AGITATED

You feel some adrenaline and a slight jolt to the system. You might act somewhat more upset but it is barely noticeable.

Attention: +1
Brawn:
Cool:
Reaction:
Modification:
Pain Reduction:

UPSET

Your aggression is more prominent and you start to shake somewhat. You can feel your heart racing a bit, and your reasoning is slightly affected. Your body is well prepared to confront dangers or get as far away from them as possible.

Attention: +1
Brawn:
Cool: +1
Reaction: +1
Modification: -1
Pain Reduction: Wound penalties count as 1 less

ENRAGED

You have to choose between Fight or Flight. If you choose Fight you will throw yourself at the threat, ignoring obvious dangers. If you choose Flight you will run, pushing aside anything in your way.

It is very hard to make use of any reasoning, and it is almost impossible to talk you out of it. Whenever you talk you scream and you are dead set on having your way. Your heart rate is through the roof and the adrenaline surges in your veins. You can still distinguish friend from foe, but if someone grabs you, you are probably going to shove him away.

Attention: +2
Brawn: +1
Cool: +1
Reaction: +1
Modification: -2
Pain Reduction: Wound penalties count as 1 less

RABID

Something has snapped. You are unable to form coherent thoughts other than those focusing on the imminent threat. Your speech is reduced to short grunts. If you try to shoot and miss too many times you might throw the gun at your opponent, or use it as a blunt weapon. You lose large chunks of your intellectual faculties and your reasoning. Driving in this state is hard and not recommended. You can have some trouble telling friend from foe if they come at you in an aggressive manner, and most of what people say sounds dim and far away. Your heart feels like a jackhammer and the amount of adrenaline in your system makes you shake like a meth-junkie. You aren't willing to run out in a hail of bullets but you have no trouble taking on several opponents armed with melee weapons. Memories of the incident are very blurred, and from this stage and beyond you are rarely capable of dodging non-lethal attacks, you simply don't care.

Attention: +2
Brawn: +2
Cool: +2
Reaction: +2
Modification: -3
Pain Reduction: Wound penalties count as 2 less, can move at full speed when badly wounded and hobble when critically wounded.

BERSERK

The only thing about you that seems slightly human is your appearance. You are incapable of speech, reason or logic. You cannot understand what people are saying and you bite, hit, claw, and scratch to get away from or deal with the imminent threat. Your veins are about to pop and your heartbeats feel like a never-ending series of rapid explosions in your chest.

This state is extremely frightening to behold as your face is distorted to a mask of animalistic savagery. Your pupils are completely dilated, and the iris has shrunk to a thin outer ring, making your eyes black as coal. It is hard to distinguish enemy from friend in this state of mind. You are probably incapable of using guns, or any other form of tools or machines, as anything other than melee weapons. Memories of your actions are hazy at best.

Attention: +2

Brawn: +3

Cool: +2

Reaction: +3

Modification: Can only perform physical actions of raw power and simple movements.

Pain Reduction: Wound penalties count as 2 less, can move at full speed when badly wounded and hobble when critically wounded.

ANGRY NPC

It would be too much of a hassle to have five detailed stages of Fight or Flight for all non-player characters. To solve this they are considered to only have two stages. The first stage gives them a +2 to Brawn, and the second gives them a +3 to these aptitudes and a +2 to Cool as well. They have a pain reduction of 1 (regardless of level) and a modifier of -2 when enraged. Beyond enraged they are treated as being berserk when performing actions. The first stage is when they become Enraged and the second comes into effect when they are pushed further up the stages. If you wish you can use the detailed stages for NPCs as well, but it can become quite detrimental to the smoothness of the gameplay. Humans and defiled may enter Fight or Flight.

CULT INDOCTRINATION

The world of Noctum is filled with hidden occult organizations. Some members are willing to serve but many are forced. Sects and Cults use various technique to sway new members. In order to ensure loyalty they resort to cruel methods if the person in questions isn't a willing subject. Basically, they break down the personality of someone and rebuilds it, filling the victim with propaganda and dogmatism in accordance with the belief of the cult.

The rules for indoctrination work using a system involving *indoctrination points*. The sect need to accumulate an amount of indoctrination points equal to the amount of half the victim's total (not current) psyche points plus ten. Every sect has an indoctrination score ranging from 3 to as high as 10. This score is pitted against the victim's Cool in a contested test. Each day or week (depending on the situation) a test is made. When the sect has accumulated the appropriate amount of indoctrination points the individual has become loyal to the sect. For example, a

character with a total of 40 psyche points would require for a sect to accumulate 30 indoctrination points to ensure the character's loyalty. The first 20 points is the sum of the character's total psyche points (40), divided by two. To this another 10 points are added as described above.

Each day or week the sect make a contested test using their indoctrination score pitted against the victim's Cool. If the sect wins each success generates 3 indoctrination points. The storyteller has to decide the exact indoctrination score and frequency of the rolls for each sect, as it may vary depending on the organization's current resources and methods.

Individuals with a low mentality are easier to sway since they have a negative modifier that applies to their Cool. Because of this, sects usually break down a victim, using such tactics as sleep deprivation, abuse, and torture or pure psychological manipulation. When the person has lost all his will to live, the sect begins the indoctrination. When loyalty has been assured, the cult usually helps the individual to regain his confidence (i.e. providing therapeutic methods to help him regain psyche points). This will make it harder for someone to deprogram them. If the process is cut short the victim will keep the indoctrination points until someone rids him of them. He isn't loyal to the sect if the process weren't completed, but it will be much easier for the sect to start over, and the victim might have some sympathy for the sect (similar to the Stockholm syndrome).

To help someone get rid of indoctrination the Deprogramming skill is used. The system for deprogramming works exactly as the indoctrination. The deprogrammer pits his rank in deprogramming against the Cool of the victim, and the indoctrinated gets a +2 to his Cool as the indoctrination is hardwired into his subconscious. Each day (or every third depending on the indoctrination) a contested test is made. Every score above the score of the victim depletes one indoctrination point. The deprogrammer has to be at the side of the victim almost eight hours a day. If an indoctrinated person gets away from the deprogrammer he will regain a indoctrination point each day (if the indoctrination was complete).

Deprogramming can be a cruel thing indeed as the victim (if brought to a high mentality by the sect after the indoctrination) might need to be broken down in order to ensure success. When the deprogramming is over, the victim usually needs professional help (again!) to get back on his feet. Sleep deprivation and verbal abuse are usually tools employed by deprogrammers. The abuse doesn't attack the individual as such, but attacks his "sect persona" and what the sect stands for. Deprogrammers usually need to lock up the one they are trying to help, as the indoctrinated certainly would try to make it back to the sect otherwise.

Deprogramming and indoctrination can give rise to very strong role-playing that can be quite enjoyable. See to it (as always) that you handle these things with respect and care.

FYI

This chapter is meant as a guide describing how to deal with mental stress. If you feel that rolls and exact counting of psyche points (and regression points) is slowing down your game you could simply decide when players lose psyche points and gain mental disorders.

Always encourage the players to act out the mental states and disorders of their characters. For some it might be a tall order, but if it all comes together you will be able to enjoy a great mood elevator and dramatic role-play. Let the players find their own way to their character's insanity; just as they add quirks to their characters they should add different aspects to the acting out of a disorder or low mental state.

Fight or Flight isn't meant as a character "boost" as such, and the horror of losing control should always be played out and stressed. Players should fear stage three and beyond as their characters lose much of themselves.

Of course, it can save them at times but may as well bring about their demise. Fight or Flight can create utterly insane but entertaining situations and allows characters to really snap. Think of an otherwise calm librarian who has been pushed over the limit. Wielding an axe she's slashing a bloody path through the undead as they surround her, frantically giggling as she's dishing out the pain.

Don't forget that NPCs also may suffer from a low mentality, disorders, and have different weaknesses. It can be a good idea to figure out these stats for important NPCs as their behavior, and how they relate to things, will be severely affected by it.

CHAPTER 11

ORIGINS OF DARKNESS

Where do they all come from, these things? What are they? I have seen so many horrible things since that fateful day I went up to that attic. Once you have seen them and they know you have seen them, you are drawn into their world. All my life they have been there, but I just didn't know. Have they been here all the time, with us from the beginning? Are they our own grim reflection?

I am sitting in another motel room and I'm drunk as hell. I just don't know what to do anymore. The world makes no sense. It's only dark and dangerous. Are all these creatures just hunting us for sport at random or is there something controlling them? How can the rest of humanity not know?

The strangest part is that these entities, these beings, feel familiar. Like an ominous whisper I've heard since the crib. I think it is inside us all. The darkness, the evil. I remember when I was fourteen and one of my classmates, her name was Lesley Newman, had killed a homeless man by beating him to death in a back alley. She was arrested and the story hit all the papers, but they never found out why. Lesley hung herself in prison a month later. They found a note she had written: "Why are they here?" Lesley's crime, her suicide, her last words. Had it been them? Those who hunt me now, the dark ones? I must wonder: why are they here?

But I wonder another thing as well: How do we stop them? That is the question I really want to know the answer to.





There is a darkness that lurks in the shadows. It has sentience and a physical form. Things we only thought could exist in our nightmares have sprung to life, and unseen by most, these entities stalk the outer rim of our perception.

The question is why? Nothing exists without a purpose and this is true for these entities as well. What do these forces want with us, why are they here? An earthquake is a force of nature; the living darkness is a force of existence.

THE ORIGIN OF DARKNESS

Mankind is a selfish race. Since the dawn of time we have divided ourselves into groups, knowingly creating distances between one another: Us and them. Violence, war, the need to control others of our kind through fear has always been there.

We created systems of beliefs, in the beginning these were in place to explain the world we saw around us but soon these systems were used by those in power to garner even more control and influence but the masses still believed.

It is unclear if the dark ones came from somewhere beyond or if we actually created them through our own malice. But it matters little for the result is the same. The darkness is fueled by the sadism, selfishness and cruelty of mankind and the suffering we inflict upon each other. We have given these entities a way to manifest through our own twisted beliefs and overwhelming desires of the self. The dark ones themselves, like unseen and subtle puppeteers, reflect our own evil back at us, intensifying it, driving mankind to continue on the destructive path we created for ourselves with even more zeal.

ANATOMY OF DARKNESS

The darkness has a parasitical nature and can only survive when harvesting dark energies from humans. These energies consist of angst, madness, pain and fear.

The dark ones affects mankind, but mankind unknowingly affects the darkness in return. Many beings that have taken on the form of myth believe it so intently that they no longer remember anything else.

The Coil is a phenomenon with a life of its own. This world is one of the reasons why the dark ones have been divided and scattered. The Coil funnels much of the dark energies, creating bizarre worlds and half-breeds sporadically.

FACTIONS

The darkness is divided into factions. Some wish to destroy mankind itself while others wish to corrupt us and live off the energies of man for eternity, some have no real goal and believe themselves to be creatures of dark myth.

THE FIRST

These beings follow the commands of the seven Harbingers, sometimes referred to as the seven brothers, and are the most powerful concepts of human evil given physical form. The Harbingers are extremely powerful but they are trapped in the Coil, bound by chains of their own making as they have amassed power by taking the form of human belief.

Their confinement has led them to hate the world of man and it's quite possible that they will end our world and race in their rage if they ever manage to cross over. Without us they will die, but like humankind they too are capable of destroying themselves while looking for vengeance.

They wish to find a way to break through. They hope to amass enough dark energy to allow their minions to destabilize our world, making it merge with the Coil. If this happens the seven brothers would be able to affect humans with full force in the open as there would be no more distinction between the Coil and the world of man. Their end game is referred to as the *Reaping*. It is unclear exactly what it entails but it is quite possible that it might entail the aforementioned destruction of man.

THE BETRAYERS

From the beginning there were eight brothers but one chose another path. Ahriman betrayed his brothers to be able to walk the world of man. He relinquished some of his power which allowed him to pass into our physical world and walk among humans. Ahriman wants to control mankind, living among us in obscurity, feeding of their despair.

The creatures that obey him share the same goal. They plant small seeds here and there in order to plunge mankind into the depths of depravity and violence. The First ones do this as well but they wish to harness the energy. The betrayers use these energies purely to add to their own power and to sustain themselves.

Ahriman constantly wages war against his brothers, the Harbingers, to stop them from succeeding in their plans. If the minions of the Harbingers would win, the Earth would probably be left void of human life; this would be the end of Ahriman as he would surely be destroyed without a source to feed upon. So Ahriman doesn't want to destroy mankind, rather torture us for eternity from the shadows.

THE UNBOUND

These wretches have no insight into the truth. They are created from mad fantasies, depraved acts and collective fears. The unbound are often weaker creatures (sometimes quite powerful though) that have been created from small remnants of dark energies.

A horror story that gains reputé during the years may develop into an unbound. The collective fears and beliefs are merged with dark energies, forming an entity that actually believes it is a true ghost, monster or other being of ghastly urban legend. Parts of the ill-omened work of a depressed mentally ill artist, or writer, might come to life as an unbound if the work is inspired and gloomy enough. Many dark ones take the visage of harrowing and twisted fantasies but they know the truth; the unbound on the other hand believe they are creatures of myth, curses and fantasies. Certain types of unbound creatures are more frequent than others but many are unique. Often they are the product of human evil and suffering, a manifestation and incarnation of vile acts.

Unbound creatures often live out an existence of solitude. They harass humans indiscriminately and have no conceptions of factions. Both the First ones and the Betrayers hunt them down at times, forcing them to join them. If they refuse (most of the time the deluded creatures won't even be able to communicate) they are destroyed.

DEMONS

Demonic creatures are those who have been portraying demons for a very long time, so long that they have forgotten their origin. They live in hells constructed in the Coil. These creatures have the powers and limitations bestowed the demon they portray. One can say that they (like the unbound) have been unknowingly trapped in human beliefs.

Demons believe other creatures to be runaway demons and think that they themselves are the most powerful beings in existence. They live in hierarchies according to the demonology that created them. They work to corrupt man through demonic possession and temptations. Betrayers and the First often use them for their own ends, as these misguided creatures can be powerful allies.

HARBINGERS

Harbingers have a physical form that is confined to their individual realms of the Coil. Their realms, forms and powers have changed during the eons but during the last two thousand years they have taken the shape of the worst demons depicted by religion. The reason for this is that no other dark entities have so many believers than those depicted in the religious texts. There has never been a God, nor a heaven, hell or any Angels. Everything in the Bible is a lie, and the Harbingers know this.

The texts were written by men as a way to exert power, and the only thing that became real was the dreadfulness since the dark ones mould themselves into horrors of human invention. Every prayer to God is worthless to the person performing it, but when they believe in God they validate the existence of the horrors of the faith. This means that prayer strengthen the powers of the Harbingers.

Unknowingly, religious people pray to creatures that have taken on the role of devils.

Harbingers are confined to their realms in the Coil but they still have the power to affect our world. Sometimes through dreams and sins, other times they work through their minions. Each Harbinger has a frontrunner, a general of sorts, in the form of a Vaakal. These powerful creatures walk the Earth, hidden from man, doing the bidding of their masters. Only thirteen Vaakals exist. Seven act on the behalf of the Harbingers, three serve Ahriman and the remaining three are lost but still living. Ahriman and the Harbingers search tirelessly for these powerful beings. They hope to gain control of them and use their power to win the war.

Sometimes a Harbinger may influence a human, or situation, but there has to be a way in, a notion of human evil. If a depraved rapist tries to have his way with a victim, Asmodai, the lord of lust, may influence the situation until the lust of the rapist spins totally out of control, resulting in an abuse even more heinous.

The most frightening aspect is that they are incapable of forcing humans to commit vile acts. They only give us a nudge, or some incentive. Their power, influence and terrible forms are a result of our own evil, fear and belief. A nod in the right direction is all they need to provide, since humanity seems to indulge in the most malicious acts without flinching. They act through the evil that rests in the heart of all mankind, and through this the Harbingers are always with us. The seven brothers all act through a human sect known as *Hostis*. These underlings do their bidding and work towards corrupting mankind.

The Harbingers have taken the names and aspects of the worst and most vile entities depicted in religious texts, and their physical forms in the Coil represent this. In their realms they are dark gods incarnate and have enormous power.

Using stats to describe them would not do these beings justice. Basically, they have unlimited power in their own realms. They can take on any appearance they wish, control gravity and the flow of time and are indestructible by human terms, and know the sin of every man, woman and child they gaze upon. Even so, there are two things one can do to diminish them.

They feed off trapped souls that reside in their realms; if one were to free many of these they would start to lose power and influence in their realms as well as in our world. How to do this is another matter, since it is almost impossible. Using extremely powerful *arch-glyphic* rituals specifically created for this might be a possibility, but one would have to perform the ritual in the realm of the Harbinger.

The other way is probably even harder. A mankind united in goodness would also diminish them, but this, as we all know, is probably impossible. Mankind has never been a race particularly fond of playing nice with each other.

A Harbinger is a terrible thing to behold, and most humans will be driven insane by their sheer presence. Our fear gave them inspiration and our evil gave them life. The forms of the seven Harbingers are as follows.

ASMODAI (LUST)

The king of lust takes on the form of a reddish mass of shapeless fleshy muscle tissue. The damp flesh constantly ripples and changes in mass and form. The bulk of this dreadful being consists of thousand of bodies merged together. Mouths, organs, eyes, limbs and genitals bulge and pulsate in the disgusting chaos.

The Harbinger is surrounded by a thousand moans, groans and screams as the merged bodies suffer, satisfy and twist in agony. He lies on the ground as a thick layer of flesh covering a large area. He contorts and slithers to get to where he wants.

Frontrunner: The Vaakal serving Asmodai goes by the name *Chemriel* and acts through the adult movie industries and prostitution. He tears down our veneer of morality and desensitizes us to the point where only the most violent and perverse acts of sexual depravity stir our lust.

He sends us dreams that awaken our darkest desires and gives us the will to act upon them. Chemriel does everything in his power to drive sexual sadists, rapists and pedophiles over the edge, causing them to feed their twisted desires indulging in unimaginable acts of abuse.

BA'AL ZEBÛB (GLUTTONY)

This Harbinger "stands" five meters tall and has an enormously corpulent deformed body that oozes of fatty stinking ichors. He has no head and his chest has a gigantic mouth dripping with stomach acids. He is the king of gluttony and his sticky gray skin ripples as unidentified creatures swim in the underlying fat.

He has no legs and in their place a larva-like bloated limb wriggles. His flabby arms end in gigantic hands with thirteen fingers each. Heavy chains with hooks are attached to his fleshy back, holding him half-sitting over his putrid and decomposing throne.

Frontrunner: Ba'al Zebûb has the aid of the Vaakal *Omroth*. Omroth inspires us to over consume and is also the main cog driving the drug industry. He acts through drug addicts and cartels. By making us addicted to drugs he dulls our senses, making it easier for his master to affect us.



MASTEMA (WRATH)

Mastema is the lord of wrath and stands three meters tall, bulging with muscles. His skin is stripped from his body and he drips of gore. Wrath is blind, and so Mastema doesn't possess any eyes, and not even eye cavities gape in their place. The gigantic mouth is without lips, twisted in a harrowing smile for all eternity and instead of teeth rusty blades of knives penetrate the gums.

Axes, firearms, knives, swords and all kinds of weapons are buried in his naked flesh, merged together in a revolting manner. From the waist down he is draped in a twisted tapestry of peeled off human faces that still howl in agony.

Fronrunner: The general of Mastema goes by the name *Dawrokh*. He might appear as the stranger picking a fight that ends in a riot that ends in a war; he is the one that casts the first stone. But he is also found in the higher ranks of society. He acts through departments of defense and weapons research. This Vaakal spreads destruction, retaliation, and hatred.

Dawrokh frequently works together with Anvol as their methods and interests often coincide. Dawrokh has a penchant for nudging serial killers the "right" way.

SEMHAZAI (PRIDE)

As the master of pride his form is a caricature of the proud king. The Harbinger is four meters tall and has a brownish dried-up husk of a body. The mummified flesh shows off

the edges of his bones and his face is that of a skull with chunks of burnt smoldering flesh. His empty hollows stare blankly. Semhazai is clothed in the garb befitting a king but the garbs are twisted and perverse. He has a crown of rusted nails, a worm-infested decomposing cloak and a scepter stitched together of burnt flesh decorated with human teeth.

Fronrunner: The Vaakal named *Anvol* serves the master of pride. He, like his brethren, takes on many forms and wanders the rims and centers of wars to spur them on. He takes a great deal of interest in the political scene where he may instigate conflicts or ruin peace negotiations.

Anvol whispers in the ear of warmongers, telling them tales of glory and pride that may be won on the battlefield. He is the one pitting races against each other and does everything in his power to encourage ethnic cleansings and religious narrow-mindedness. He has instigated countless wars throughout the ages.

MAMMON (GREED)

Mammon's shape has changed greatly during the ages and the last several centuries he has entombed himself in the center of his realm. He is encased inside a large diamond. He only shows himself when someone gazes inside the stone and what they see is pure greed, this greed infects them.

Everyone experiences the encounter differently and what has been viewed is impossible to describe. Some actually see Mammon, others only feel the greed take hold while others get visions of greed that they act up on.

Fronrunner: The Vaakal *Rialoth* represents Mammon. He acts through all kinds of industries to breed even more greed. Developed countries burn and throw away surplus food when others starve to keep the market value up. Since the dawn of the modern world oil has always been the object of greed, and wars are waged over the black gold. Rialoth carefully overlooks the chaos and spurs the onslaught of greed. He takes on the form of the ruthless CEO and is the master of corruption. He often collaborates with Omroth since their goals sometimes overlap.

BELPHEGOR (SLOTH)

Belphegor takes on the form of a pale, almost translucent, humanoid. He stands two meters tall and is extremely thin. Beneath his glossy exterior, tortured souls can be seen swimming. His body is completely smooth and he has no distinguishing features such as eyes, mouth, genitals or muscle bulges. It looks as if he is been forged in milky glass in a mould. Whenever he chooses to show a face or expression an eerie image appears where his face should have been. Whoever gazes directly into him sees a twisted version of their real selves, as they appear as a lost soul trapped in the sin of sloth.

Frontrunner: *Ezrágon* represents this Harbinger in our world. He acts through various kinds of mass media. Through these networks he dulls our senses, bombarding us with scenes of violence and chaos until we no longer pay attention to the suffering of others. He instills apathy; we only raise an eyebrow when a natural disaster occurs and thank our lucky star that we weren't involved.

He makes us turn the other way when something terrible happens. We see the bruises of the battered child but don't want to get involved. We hear the screams of the rape victim, but we shut it out, walking away to safety. With the remote in our hands we watch the screen in morbid fascination as war rages, not really caring as long as we have it comfortable.

Ezrágon inspire our natural unwillingness to get involved, and has turned many into slothful creatures that let cruelties pass by without a word. He can be found poisoning the minds of our children in the tangled web of the Internet.

LEVIATHAN (ENVY)

Leviathan takes on the appearance of a gigantic serpent. The enormously long body has a crusted surface that is riddled with cracks and reminiscent of a revolting mosaic of infected wound scabs. His body ripples and tormented shapes of faces can be seen pressing outward from the inside. These are souls trying to escape their damnation.

His head is a cluster of twelve deformed faces merged into one and he has oddly thin arms with a long reach that ends in three fingers. Sometimes he surrounds his entire realm like a great wall of putrid flesh.

Frontrunner: The frontrunner of Leviathan is called *Gemtzadin*. This Vaakal waters the seed of envy in the heart of man. He acts as a tempter and rumormonger, and portrays our lives as a bleak existence compared to those around us, making us crave and envy the belongings and successes of others. He turns neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother.

Envy leads to conflicts ranging from minor altercations and family feuds to outright wars.

THE VISION OF AHRIMAN

Ahriman strives toward gaining control of the unbound and the demons. He wants to create a kingdom on earth with the aid of these creatures and feed upon humanity as long as possible. He favors those creatures that symbolize human fear incarnate. Forsaken, Gibarachs, Nethralls and Vrislagri are examples of such creatures. In other words, he wishes to keep the world much as it is, but wants to spread even more despair to gain power enough to rid existence of his brothers. His brothers also wish to gain control over the demons and unbound to instigate the reaping, but Ahriman constantly fights them.

Ahriman revels in his existence on earth but if the reaping ever comes to be, Ahriman would surely perish as his source of nourishment, mankind, in all likelihood would cease to exist.

Ahriman is evidently weaker than his brothers but his strength lies in the fact that he is capable of manipulating the Coil and mankind directly without the aid of a middleman. For thousands of years he has acted through cults and sects but it wasn't until the 14th century that he gained the control of a really powerful sect with knowledge and vast resources. This organization has evolved into a true power base and goes under the name *Prometheus*.

His most powerful minions are those of *Yhadhev*, *Jismanoth* and *Belshadad*. These are the three Vaakals that have joined his side in the epic war.

REALMS OF THE BETRAYER

The Harbingers have their own kingdoms but Ahriman walks the different realms. He takes those he needs and gains control over even more creatures. In a way, Ahriman is the master of many realms that exist in the Coil. He has created hellholes to which he lures the souls of sinners, feeding on them and sometimes reshaping them into creatures of darkness. There is a constant battle for the souls of humans; the Harbingers try to lead them to their kingdoms and Ahriman tries to lure them to his hellholes.

The betrayer never travels to the kingdoms of his brothers, as they would tear him apart. When he by necessity has to gain entrance to one of the seven kingdoms (such as when he wishes to steal the souls) he sends one of his minions in his stead.

POWERS OF THE LOST BROTHER

Ahriman is very much like a Vaakal in his rudimentary strength and abilities, but he has even more powers at his disposal. He can travel to any location in the Coil at will, with the exception of the seven kingdoms, and he may take on the appearance of anyone he wishes. He may have twelve different forms walking the earth but is incapable of creating spawns (see Vaakals).

Ahriman has the power to cause Coil distortions that are connected to his hellholes without much effort. Inside his hellholes he exerts the same control as his brothers do in their kingdoms. He controls time and gravity and can make flames blast forth and acids to spray and have chains wrapped around his foes by strength of will alone. These lesser physical powers (fires, chains etc.) can be extended to a certain limit through a distortion and thus affect our reality.

THE COIL

The Coil is like a living being unto itself and cannot be fully understood or controlled by any of the dark ones. It is drawn towards those energies that created it, such as angst, fear and pure human evil. In the Coil, these kinds of energies recreate the worst nightmares of mankind and the dark desires of twisted minds. This means that the sickest and most gruesome fantasy may come to life and manifest physically in the Coil.

The Coil is capable of capturing harrowing emotions and desires as well as souls. Some that die are trapped in the Coil until they are devoured by dark entities, reshaped into lesser dark beings or pass beyond to the unknown. Some souls find a way back to the world of man, but in these cases they leave behind that which made them human.

This gloomy dimension is a chaotic network where the laws of physics seldom apply. The Coil exists parallel to our own world, under it, over it, behind it and in it. The Coil shifts around us continuously without our knowledge, invisible to most. But sometimes an individual, that is unfortunate enough, may unwittingly wander into this unholy region.

Insanity and places saturated with mankind's evil and dark energies may act as gateways to the Coil. Some arch-glyphic rituals and relics may also have the power to open rifts. When a person enters the Coil it is extremely hard to navigate. The myriads of realms often shift and merge, and it is often impossible to gain any overview of where one realm ends and another begins.

WHEN & HOW

Some places, events, relics and rituals may act as portals or windows to the different realms of the Coil. The storyteller is the one that decides when characters risk ending up in one of these realms.

The Coil gives the storyteller a very powerful tool and can be used to create extremely intense scenes of creepy ambiance. The trick is to use the Coil with moderation. Characters aren't even always aware that they have entered the Coil some times, while at other times it is obvious as the surroundings twists, contorts and morphs into a bizarre reality.

Seasoned characters, that have come across the dark minions and been afflicted by insanity on several occasions, are more likely to end up in the Coil, since this dimension is drawn to angst and misery.

Example: *Silak and Victor are walking down the seedy back alleys. They are investigating the theft of an occult manuscript, and acting on a tip they are looking for a shady broker of rare documents.*

As they walk down the alley they come across some small altars that seem to have been built by using whatever debris was available. A cadaver of a cat lies on one of the altars, still trickling blood, and weird symbols are painted all around the place.

They proceed further in, and more and more strange, and macabre, discoveries are made. Suddenly a thick mist rolls in and they find themselves standing in a large square. In the middle a young girl is tied to a pile of sharp metal pikes. From the surrounding clutters of rundown buildings a hoard of deformed men and women come lumbering, sporting lead pipes, axes and broken bottles. They are all chanting "Blood walker, blood walker!" over and over again.

The players declare that their characters draw their guns and the storyteller smiles viciously. Neither the players nor the characters realize that they have been transported to a Death Path, one of the many realms of the Coil.

DISTORTIONS

Sometimes the Coil overlaps with our reality. When this happens, beings and surroundings may merge with our reality for a short while before they fade away, back to their realms of origin. It can be quite disturbing when a character runs into an out-of-place individual or surrounding, and as soon as he turn his head, the "mirage" disappears. A character can get in a real tight spot if a place distorts into a Den of War and innocents are killed in a hail of bullets. The guilty ones then disappear into the realm again, leaving the character standing over a bloody pile of corpses.

A distortion is rare in and of itself, but as the Coil is drawn to those that have evil in their hearts, or have been close to the dark ones for extended periods of time, the characters will probably be unfortunate enough to run into them.

Some places pose high-risk zones. In these places, gateways and distortions are more likely to occur. Desolate houses where brutal murders have occurred and places where horrid sacrificial rituals have been conducted are good examples.



The Coil is always searching for lost and depraved souls as the blasphemous dimension crave dark energies. Tales of distortions reach the public from time to time in the form of ghost stories and urban legends. The story of the hitchhiker that really was a ghost, the tale of the church with bleeding walls; some stories of this nature are actually accounts of people who experienced a distortion.

SEEING WHAT IS HIDDEN

The darkness affects the whole world and numerous individuals, whether they know it or not. Sometimes a creature of darkness may inadvertently, just for a blink of an eye, reveal its true nature. People whose hearts are filled with evil also risks to unconsciously transfer their own malevolence into a noticeable change in visage. This change is never physical; rather it is an unwilling mental projection into the mind of another.

Most of the time it is only the mentally ill or those who experienced the darkness intensely that may see these things. Also, children might be able to notice this due to their undiluted minds. A serial killer might appear as a rotting vile corpse, a half-breed in human form might reveal aspects of his true self.

Example: *Silak is in a mental institution, not as a patient though. He is there to talk to a patient that might have some clues regarding a case he is working on. He walks down the dirty corridor. He can hear the cries and desperate screams from the patients. An orderly accompanies him.*

As he walks the lights start to flicker, and he turns towards the man to ask what is going on. As he looks upon the orderly he sees that the face of the man is a clot of decomposing flesh riddled with maggots. As soon as he sees it, it disappears and the man

looks completely normal. The orderly explains that they have some problems with the breakers. Silak isn't certain of what he saw but is deeply disturbed. He scarcely manages to maintain his composure.

The storyteller had decided that some of the orderlies are sadists that have been sexually abusing and torturing the patients for years. As Silak has been close to darkness several times, and has some serious dents in his mentality, the storyteller decided it was fitting that he saw a glimpse of the man's true evil nature.

REALMS

There are sixteen (seventeen if you count the Shadow Paths) realms that exist in the Coil. There are many versions of the different realms; an exception is the seven kingdoms that only exist in one version each.

All the realms have a function and a purpose, even if human logic cannot grasp them. Something that shouldn't be forgotten is that these places don't exist physically in our world but are physical dimensions unto themselves, existing on another plane. Only through distortions can the two worlds meet.

Time works very differently in the different realms and the Coil as a whole in comparison to our world. In most cases time moves slower. When an hour has passed in the Coil only ten seconds might have passed in our world. Time can also move faster and as one hour has passed in the Coil three days might have flown by in reality. It isn't uncommon that people get transported for long reaches of space. A short walk down a road in the Coil might make the character reemerge several miles (and in extreme cases, continents) from where he entered the Coil.

In the Domains of Time the concept of time is even more skewed. Changes in time can be localized. A piece of metal may rust into dust in a matter of seconds while a bullet may move in a slow pace, as it is shot from a gun. These events may occur only a few meters apart.

GLYPHIC TEMPLES

These are gargantuan and ancient. How they appeared is a mystery. They have the forms of underground temples. The ceilings are high, supported by large pillars that are engraved with arch glyphs. The design is chaotic and hundreds of stairs run between narrow overpasses, levels and floating platforms, some circle the pillars.

A person that spends time in one of these temples can feel the power of the arch glyphs flow through him, and most are overcome with a feeling of being insignificant in the presence of this raw power. The bottom, several hundred meters down, consists of a greenish swamp-like terrain and a system of caves.

Torches of green everlasting flames burn on the walls and shed an unnatural light, which makes the weird and gloomy statues depicting ancient and forgotten beings look even more sinister. The sound of dripping water, crackling torches, faint clucking and distant heartbeats echo throughout the temple. Sometimes dark ones that have gone astray might skulk in the overpasses and darkened corners.

HELLHOLES

Hellholes are created from the collective consciousness of sinners that have been merged with dark energies at the moment of death and caught in the Coil. There are many versions of these realms. Some are shaped like gigantic industrial floors filled with half-organic mechanical devices of torture. The physical souls of sinners are ripped apart over and over again. Other Hellholes resemble a hot smoldering sulfurous version of a city, a constant wind of hot ashes blows hard and here the sinners are tortured with fires and acids under the burning sky. There are as many versions of Hellholes as the human mind can concoct. These represent our different depictions of hell throughout time.

Demons and other creatures roam these places, torturing the souls. Demons linger here since they believe this place to be their natural realm. Other creatures, such as unbound, can wander into this place driven by their hatred for mankind. Alsekthaals, Gesoids, Nethralls, Mendroloths, Vrislagri, Wossals, and the occasional Golnagoth, are creatures often found in these realms. The screams and cries of the tortured victims echo constantly.

Hellholes are the great lie of Ahriman. He planted the seed of these realms so that he could lure the souls of sinners from the grasp of his brothers. When a human dies

his soul wanders and unconsciously searches for a place appropriate for his sins; some pass to the unknown but others find their way to the seven kingdoms of sin or a Hellhole, especially those of a religious belief.

To enter a Hellhole before one's death is usually possible through distortions or gateways. These can only be found in those places that have borne witness to the most gruesome and disturbing sacrificial rituals or brutal and perverted murders. A place that a serial killer has used over and over again to slay his victims, and sites of other similar atrocious crimes, might create gateways or distortions.

The souls in these places are tortured for years; sometimes a few years, other times they are tortured for millennia. The agony fills the souls with even more dark energies. Some are twisted into half-breeds or demons while the masters of the realm devour others, ripe with dark energies. This is the main source of nourishment for demons and Ahriman. Hellholes can be as small as a parking lot or as big as several large cities.

CONSTRUCTS

Constructs are the realms of the Gesoids. These are gigantic towers several miles high, and are a mix of old and new technology. Ancient machines from a time long since forgotten and times not yet seen cover every wall, floor and ceiling. They are merged in impossible ways and layouts, that in their imperfection still seem perfectly put together and balanced. The buzzing sound from thousands of hard drives mixed with the clanking sound of steam pistons and cogs are constant.

Narrow overpasses, cables, service tunnels, escalators, ladders, lifts and conveyor belts connect the interior of Constructs. Exposed power stations, huge vats of acids, loose electric wires, pipes spewing of hot gases, and metal presses make these realms enormously dangerous to travel. Here and there control panels and screens are mounted on the walls. The screens can show anything from an ongoing perverted experiment to a random movie that the Gesoids for some reason found it necessary to study. Sometimes the PA system comes to life and the Gesoids scream out orders in their electronic shattering language. Each level is several hundred square meters in size.

There are usually forty Gesoids that roam the upper levels of Constructs. They are constantly calibrating their memory banks and experiments. They have several Vrislagri and Wossals that act as guards and overseers.

Constructs are living machines in and of themselves. They are enormously complex units that serve as storage for human suffering and memories. The Gesoids experiment with the human condition in search of the soul, and these places are their base of operations.

Constructs were created by Ahriman, as were the Gesoids. This is his attempt to understand the human soul. With

even more insight into the human condition he can find more ways to torture the race of man and corrupt them. There is no point of studying the souls that roam the Coil since they are tainted with dark energies, ridding them of what it means to be human.

The lower regions are filled with older technology and are abandoned for the most part. Whenever new technology is introduced the Gesoids add a new level, leaving the older ones behind. Some levels are used as production units, others as sources of power.

Constructs have no outer form; it is impossible to view a Construct from the outside. Gateways and distortions to these places are rare, and usually only show up in high-tech laboratories where questionable and cruel experiments take place. It is also possible that one will stumble upon these realms when traveling through Shadow Paths.

Most Constructs are operated by Gesoids that are under the sway of Ahriman, but some have been forgotten and the inhabitants perform erratic and sickening experiments, acting on ancient orders and directives.

DENS OF WAR

Dark energies are derived from pain, despair, hate and anxiety and wars are a melting pot of these emotions. Dens of War are realms in the Coil that have "recorded" certain scenes of different wars and keep repeating them. The scenes can be as short as a couple of hours or involve years. The people trapped in the scenes are souls given physical form with the aid of dark energies. They don't realize what is going on and believe that they are still alive and fighting the war. Whenever they are killed, or when the scene loops, their memories are erased and they continue to fight.

As with Hellholes these souls accumulate more and more dark energies and are in the end devoured by powerful dark ones. Many Dens of War aren't known by the dark ones, and the souls that are trapped in these places fight for an eternity, but sometimes they realize what is going on and in that moment they pass on to the unknown, freed from their torture. In these cases there is often something wrong that has to be put right before they can pass on.

Some scenes are made up of actual wars; others are a mix of several. Some wars that are played out here never even happened and are a construct of the trapped souls imagination.

Ahriman created the earliest Dens of War as a source of sustenance, but through the ages hundreds have been created on their own. It goes without saying that gateways and distortion to these can be found in areas plagued by intense battles. This may happen in a ghetto during a gangland war or in a war between countries.

World War Two gave birth to numerous Dens of War. Some of them have been brought forth as a manifestation

of the death camps in Nazi Germany. These differ in appearance and consist of huge death camps where the smoke of seared flesh hangs heavy in the air, the gas flows eternally in some chambers, killing all that step inside. Most are controlled by the angry and restless souls of the victims that now torment their old tormentors, and anyone else that crosses their path of blind hate.

DEATH PATHS

Poverty breeds desperation and desperation creates crime, death and dismay. Death Paths are created by one of two things: Rundown slums where the desperation has led to unimaginable violent crimes, abuse and deaths, or by a place that has been the site of numerous and extremely perverted crimes, such as serial killings and other sadistic sexual murders.

Death Paths take on the appearance of rundown cities, neighborhoods, underground sewer tunnels or labyrinths of seedy back alleys. Everything is in the grip of decay and the buildings and streets are crumbling. The sky is always dark and a thick mist or rain sweeps across these murky realms.

The inhabitants are often actual people (not souls) that have lived in these kinds of places and their brutality and insanity have led them to the Death Paths. They live in small groups, living off the flesh of rats and each other. They have often developed their own language and inbreeding has led to many deformities.

A so-called Blood Walker usually controls a Death Path. These are mass murderers or serial killers whose inner evil and dark passions have turned them into Adepts. Their insanity has led them to these realms and here they act out their morbid fantasies.

The wretched people living in Death Paths often fear the Blood Walker and have created twisted religions and sacrificial rituals to keep him satisfied. They often tie up members of their own ranks, so that the Blood Walker may kill them instead of hunting the whole group. Blood Walkers never live with any of the groups and roam the streets in the shadows.

Distortions and gateways to this realm can be found in the most rundown and poverty stricken slums in the world. Those who wander into these places are in immediate danger, since the inhabitants would regard any outsider as a potential sacrifice or food source.

There are several hundred Death Paths; some are ruled by a Blood Walker while others are ruled by Eryls. Wossals and other lesser dark ones can be seen skulking the shadows.

SITES OF SICKNESS

Sites of Sickness have been conjured forth by the human suffering endured in the last days of agonizing disease. This realm is fairly new as it came to be during the 1340s, when the Black Death swept across Europe, killing as many as seventy-five million people.

The feverish fantasies and agonies in the dying moment of the afflicted was enough to bring these places to life. During the years they have changed. In modern times Sites of Sickness take on the appearance of deteriorating rooms and corridors of hospitals and mental institutions.

The light flickers, dust covers the floors and operating tables. Coagulated blood and pus often coat the surgical instruments. The souls trapped here are those of people that felt strong remorse, pain and vengeance as they died of diseases or mistakes made by hospital personnel. Cruel doctors and orderlies often find their way here after their death. Some people are sent here to suffer while others take on the role of torturers. Some parts of these realms are totally desolate, while the twisted patients and doctors roam some sections. Painful experiments are performed here, and screams can often be heard, as people are strapped down on surgical tables and operated on without anesthetics.

Sites of Sickness are in some cases controlled by Ahriman or one of the frontrunners of the Harbingers. At other times, lesser dark ones control them and use them to their own ends. Others just exist as private hells of suffering.

These sites may be entered through distortions and gateways found in rundown wings of hospitals where unethical practices have taken place. Asylums with a dark history are also locations where one might come across them.

There have been several occasions where patients have gone missing in hospitals; most are found but some have been transported to these realms, never to return.

GATES OF GRIEF

Gates of Grief are realms created of pure sorrow and grief. Eternal fields of gray grass filled with underground catacombs and dark gloomy mausoleums outline the terrain. The dark crimson clouds pour down a constant rain and lightning strikes repeatedly.

Statues of uncanny designs cover the mausoleums and are carved into the walls of the catacombs, and soft crying and whispers can be heard coming from them. Unnatural looking vines grow from the ground, wrapping the dark stones of the structures.

These places often seem abandoned but in the shadows foul creatures lurk. Oculs, Forsaken, Wossals, Vrslagri and Death Dwellers frequent these places as they remind them somewhat of their lost humanity on some level.

NETHER OF NIGHTMARES

When a personal horror, insanity or nightmare is too intense it can give rise to a Nether of Nightmares. These realms are personal hells, fears and fantasies given a physical form in the Coil. Their appearance and size vary depending on the nature of the emotion, dream, mental disorder or fantasy that inspired the realm to be. Some places may be a simple room that hides horrors and mysteries while others may consist of eternal woods, caverns, frozen bizarre cities, a twisted mirroring of an existing place or any other conceivable (or inconceivable) place of existence.

Creators of these realms may be living humans that have no idea that they have created them. An author who has locked himself away to write ghastly tales, doing and thinking of nothing else in his obsession, may inadvertently give rise to one of these realms, but only if his passion is intense and twisted enough. Some realms only exist as long as the creator is sleeping, others are bound to a certain object (such as an original script of horror fiction). Killing a dreamer, or destroying the object responsible for the creation of a Nether of Nightmares, destroys the realm in a matter of minutes.

Insane individuals that give rise to these places may travel there at times, as they themselves have become gateways. All those they tell only think of their stories as part of their illness. Children with intense and vivid imagination, and a phobic fear of the dark, may also give rise to these places, especially if they have had a traumatic experience (such as abuse).

It is impossible to say how many of these worlds that exist since they come and go. Some, that should have been destroyed, still linger as a certain type of half-breed known as Solidus has the power to keep a realm in existence. Souls that have created a Nether of Nightmares, and have been caught by a group of Solidi, often have to be freed somehow before the realm will cease to exist.

It is also possible for a person to enter one of these worlds while dreaming. If the person continues to dream of this place, every new nightmare feels more and more real, until the person actually may become physically affected by things that happen in the nightmare. In the end he may be transported to the realm. Otherwise, distortions and gateways to a Nether of Nightmares are as diverse as these realms themselves.

DOMAINS OF TIME

We remember the past and imagine the future differently. We reflect what would have happened if we made a different choice, and sometimes we fear what the future has in store for us. The dark ones know this.

Domains of Time are realms where our greatest fear of the future and our worst memories (even false ones) of

the past come to life. Here a person can travel back to his childhood and watch, and sometimes interfere. Only the worst memories or horrid versions of what might have happened are shown. The same goes for the future. Only our greatest fears may be experienced. As with Nethers of Nightmares domains of time vary in size and layout depending on whose past and future one is visiting. Some places are tied to an object, person or condemned soul while others are static and kept in check by dark ones who feed upon those who become trapped.

SHADOW PATHS

There are sixteen different types of Realms in the Coil but Shadow Paths aren't one of them. These are conduits between the realms. Moving between the realms is a chaotic and disorganized venture to say the least as the realms merge, shift and move. The Shadow Paths are the only (at least to some extent) way of moving between the realms in a manageable fashion. The paths are a vast system of tunnels, caves and ductworks. These paths have a tendency to shift somewhat as well, but not to the same extent as the rest of the realms.

Since they border on multiple realms they change appearance accordingly. If a tunnel borders on a Construct the walls start to look manufactured, riddled with wires and technology. Tunnels close to a Site of Sickness resemble those of a deteriorated hospital. The paths are sometimes huge, and claustrophobically narrow at other times. Faint sounds emanating from close-by realms linger in the deep gloom. Even though there are no visible sources of light, most of the time the tunnels aren't completely dark, rather they are showered in an uncanny graphite-gray light. This light seems to strip some of the ability to perceive colors while one is in it, making everything come across as black and white, or as if run through a sepia filter at best.

All kinds of creatures can be encountered here as they travel between realms but the most common ones are the huge lumbering Diggers. These beings can be seen breaking down walls, constantly building and reconstructing the Shadow Paths.

SEVEN KINGDOMS OF THE HARBINGERS

Each Harbinger has created a realm, a kingdom in the Coil. These realms have been shaped to fit the sin of each Harbinger. Religious beliefs, and humanity's conception of hell and the final judgment, have inspired the Harbingers in the designs of their kingdoms.

Only a few distortions and gateways exist into these worlds and generally one has to die, wander through a Shadow Path or use arch glyphs to enter them.

The Harbingers are trapped in their worlds but exert great control over their individual kingdoms. They use these places to feed off souls and to store dark energies inside trapped souls. Most trapped souls have found their way to these realms unconsciously at the moment of death.

As each kingdom is a manifestation of a sin, people that enter will be overcome by urges to perform these sins. One entering the Vault of Avarice would be overcome by greed, and a person walking the halls of the Womb of Depravity will find himself in the grip of vile, and perverted, desires.

SEMHAZAI: HOMAGE OF PRIDE

The kingdom of pride represents wars and feuds that were instigated by pride. A vast field of broken and rusted weapons from every age surrounds Semhazai's fortress. Red and dark clouds constantly send down a mild rain of blood.

Lost souls, guilty of the sin of pride, wander the fields and whenever they meet they try to tear each other apart since disputes of pride erupt.

All who enter this realm are overcome by a sense of pride. No one will give in to any argument and often friends can turn on each other.

In the middle of the field stands a huge tower like a fortress. The structure seems welded together of broken weapons, shards of metal and medals. The tower stands several kilometers high and is hundreds of meters wide. Labyrinths and corridors of sharp metal and rusted blades make up the interior of this unnatural structure. Roaring fires can be seen burning behind the hollow walls. Yet, only cold breezes seem to sweep across the halls. Lost souls sometimes walk these paths and Corodaths loyal to the Harbinger can be seen skulking from room to room. Lesser dark ones hide in the dim regions. In the top of the great spire Semhazai awaits, watching over his domain and furthering the fall of man.

MAMMON: VAULT OF AVARICE

Mammon's kingdom lies under ground. It is a vault in the form of a gigantic labyrinth. Heaps of gold, jewels and riches can be seen scattered around the ground. Dead corpses of those who entered and killed for greed can be seen grasping riches in their decomposed hands. Every wall is made from a strange black rock resembling obsidian glass.

In the center Mammon awaits, encased in his eternal diamond. All those who gaze upon it will be overcome with a lust to own it. It cannot be moved but the need to own it is greater than self-preservation and the afflicted will tear, kick, punch and even bite at it in feeble efforts to break off a piece. Bones break, teeth shatter and the skin tears. The person will beat himself to death in a matter of minutes if no one stops him.

If any of the riches on the ground are picked up the same greed takes hold. Many times this leads to outright brawls with deadly outcomes if there is more than one wishing to partake of the loot.

ASMODAI: WOMB OF DEPRAVITY

Asmodai furthers destructive and forbidden desires. His world consists of vast walkways of cold steel. The walls are engraved with pornographic depictions, and projections of the most perverted and decadent pornographic displays the human mind has to offer play constantly. Some of the walls are made of dark glass; whenever abuse that Asmodai has control over occurs, the scene can be viewed through the glass. Suddenly a filthy motel room can appear behind the glass and the person watching witnesses a violent and depraved scene.

Hundreds of floors and halls go on for miles, and bound by chains and ropes, men and women are tied to the walls of the corridors. A person that walks past them has to pass a Cool test. If he fails he will experience a portion of the abuse these souls have suffered in quick flashes (and will lose an appropriate amount of psyche points).

In the middle of this depraved kingdom is the pit of flesh. Here hundreds of souls are merged together in eternal cycle of the painfully depraved. Asmodai can sometimes be seen slithering amongst them feeding on the energies.

Wossals and Giberachs loyal to Asmodai usher new souls to their damnation and guard the hallways.

BA'AL ZEBÜB: GLADE OF GLUTTONY

Those who once overindulged, and found their way to the Glade of Gluttony, are often forced to feel eternal hunger that only can be satisfied for a short period of time when they gulp down the vile fluids from the seas of regurgitation. They are bound to poles and crawl to reach the sea to still their hunger.

Others are tormented in different ways; they are forced to eat rotten food until their stomachs burst and are then sewn together again for another session of force-feeding. It is the regurgitation of these sinners that keeps the steaming sea filled.

Ba'al Zebüb resides in a huge castle of medieval design. In almost every room the souls of sinners are bound by chains and force-fed by Gibarach's. The stench is unbearable. Anyone that enters this kingdom will soon feel an excruciating hunger. If they don't pass a Cool test they will feast on the putrid sea or the rotten food in the castle.

Ba'al Zebüb can be seen sitting in his chamber feasting on both decomposing food and souls ripe with dark energies.

MASTEMA: ANTIOCH OF ANGER

A city of eternal walkways, alleys, and streets in the grip of constant uproar and revolt shapes the foundation of Mastema's kingdom. All the world's rage and wrath pour into this place of wanton destruction and violence.

The buildings are made up of huge decrepit monoliths connected by walkways and bridges. Sounds of battle and brutality can always be heard, and out of nowhere attacks and violence can strike. Walls fall down, explosions and fires erupt and hordes of people come running, attacking each other and everyone they can get their hands on. The sound of bones breaking and the wet thump of falling bodies fill the eternal night of the city.

Souls of the city are created of pure rage and met their end in a violent death. A feeling of intense rage and wrath comes over those who walk the streets of this kingdom. Even small slights may be enough to send them into fits of violent rage.

BELPHEGOR: LABYRINTH OF SLOTH

Confused and lost souls stalk the Labyrinth of Sloth. Those who enter are soon overrun by sloth. Everything turns gray, and every turn look as the one previously taken. Every moment that passes worsens the indolence and forgetfulness, and soon total apathy will set in. Living humans in the grip of sloth will wander until they fall down dead and rise as lost souls, vessels of dark energy. Every hour the characters have to pass a Cool test. If they fail they start wondering erratically; only another may snap them out of it with great effort. Sloth and forgetfulness creeps up slowly, minute by minute.

Belphegor feeds on the lost souls and he has several Wossals at his disposal. These keep an eye on the souls and newcomers, preventing any attempts of escape.

Belphegor's kingdom stands in stark contrast to those of his brothers. The walls are made of white marble and the sky is blue. Dead vines cover the walls and the floor. Even though it is bright and a blue sky hangs over the kingdom a brooding sense of dismay and doom finds its way into the minds and hearts of those wandering the walkways. The silence is unnatural, only faint whispers and the murmurs of the Wossals can be heard from time to time. These Wossals move unseen through a hidden network within the walls, which are riddled with concealed entrances.

On the top of a pyramid in the center sits Belphegor on the throne of sloth, watching his kingdom.

LEVIATHAN: SEAT OF ENVY

The Seat of Envy looks differently depending on the person viewing it. Everyone sees and experiences the surroundings, and those in it, differently. Leviathan creates

personalized illusions that draw out the envy in those subjected to it. They experience themselves as inferior to those around them and want what they have, and those close by experience the individual the same way. Beyond this, a deep feeling of envy rises in the heart of those exposed to this realm.

A group of people will soon envy one another and this feeling escalates until hatred starts to brew. Souls trapped here suffer a debilitating feeling of inadequacy, tormenting their minds to no end. They are prone to hate and attack those still living as they envy the life they still live.

Leviathan uses all kinds of creatures to secure his realm and they hide behind his illusions. Leviathan himself usually wraps his enormous body around his entire kingdom.

INHABITANTS OF THE COIL

Most people that die simply pass on to the unknown but some end up in one of the many realms of the Coil. Souls that inhabit the Coil aren't aware of the fact that they are dead, and in most cases it is impossible for them to return. These souls can be "killed" using violence but they rise again later on with no memory of what happened. Only when they are devoured by a powerful dark entity or banished with the aid of arch glyphs, are they utterly destroyed. If you were to drag one of these to the world of the living they would automatically be transported back to their realm, or destroyed.

Even living humans get stuck in the Coil and can live on there for long periods of time since the ageing process halts when you are in the Coil. If they die of other causes they usually pass to the unknown.

The reason why the dark ones collect souls in this fashion is so that they may store dark energies in them. A human soul has proven to be very susceptible to dark energies and so they are perfect for storage. Pure dark energy in any large quantity is hard to come by and hard to preserve. Every half-breed that is created and every power that is used by the dark ones cost an amount of energy. The First ones find it very difficult to instigate the reaping because of this.

BECOMING EVIL INCARNATE

Storytellers portray every NPC and creature that the characters encounter; this means he has to understand the mindset of these vile creatures. When depicting one of the dark ones there is no right or wrong, and every storyteller will have a different take on how these creatures act and think. But there are some guidelines that might be helpful.

Most of these creatures experience the world in a way that would drive a human insane. Half-breeds and full bloods actually see parts of the Coil wherever they go. They can constantly hear the screams and pains of lost souls and see distortions and gateways as rippling heat waves.

Sporadically created creatures, especially unbound, rarely make a distinction between our reality and the Coil. Only the most bloodthirsty and perverted urges exist in their minds. Many times they can see and experience the death and pain of their future victims, as fantasy if you will, before they actually commit the act.

"EVIL"

Evil is a human definition and none of the greater dark ones understand the word to its full extent. They can only sense if a race is capable of generating the energies they need. One has to understand that they, as we, struggle to survive. Half-breeds that have remnants of human emotions may enjoy the death of their victims (much as sadistic humans may) but most full bloods don't experience any emotions as we do. That may be the worst part; the creatures that are partly human are the ones taking pleasure in committing vile acts.

It is important to understand that the greater dark ones don't go around being vicious for the hell of it. They do it to survive, probably not even understanding exactly what their prey endures, and they don't view themselves as evil. Our suffering simply generates the nourishment they need. When you eat, you don't really worry if the food on your plate wishes to be eaten or not.

The darkness is described as "evil" to some extent because that is how we view them. When they first laid eyes on man they simply saw that we were capable of acting as a source of nourishment in a particularly good way. But it is necessary to describe them (and their thoughts and acts somewhat) using the word evil at times. It would be quite hard describing them without the aid of human language; it would be like trying to describe a color that never existed.

OBSCURITY

Creatures of darkness hide in order to keep themselves safe. There are six billion people living on this planet and the dark ones are relatively small in numbers. If humans in general would have knowledge of these entities, the human race would become much harder to control and prey upon. Whenever a minion of darkness (that has a physical form) dies, its body dissolves. Sometimes it takes a little longer and at other times it happens in an instant (if it fits the plot, a body might not dissolve if the storyteller wishes). How they dissolve differs greatly; some might be reduced to a smelly sludge of unknown biological contents while others turn into a pile of sterile ash. The defiled turn human at the moment of death. Some of the dark energies from the creatures are scattered across the Coil. But in the end it costs them greatly whenever one of them is destroyed.

Pictures and videos of most creatures turn out blurry and unidentifiable, the dark energies that flow through the world actually work consciously to preserve the ghastly truth out of self-preservation (this is also true for the

Coil to some extent). On other occasions pictures taken of creatures in human form may turn out strange or uncanny. These aberrations are often explained as “camera malfunction”, but are a result of very high concentrations of dark energy, which at some times go haywire.

Another reason why they can stay so well hidden is the fact that the majority of creatures spend most of their time in the Coil, emerging only when it is safe to do so or when ordered by their masters. Those who do live out their existence in our world hide in human forms or in the dark corners and forgotten shadows of human civilization. Few people would believe a drunken homeless person who rants about skulking creatures in the back alleys of slums. Even the savage unbound has rudimentary instincts that help them to stay hidden to a certain degree.

No human knows the truth; when the dark ones use humans as pawns they come to them in the guise of demons, ghosts, gods or other beings of human invention.

FYI

The reason why the dimension of the many realms has been named “the Coil” adheres to simplicity and logic. It would be possible to name this world “Hell”, “Limbo”, “Purgatory” or any number of things. This, however, would not be entirely correct since all these names makes references to religion and human beliefs. Besides, some of the realms might fit these labels but many don’t.

The definition of the word “Coil” is a series of concentric rings or spirals that have been draw together by winding. In many ways this describes the structure and birth of the many realms. In the myth of man, the Coil has had every kind of name, depending on which religious dogmatism or historical view that has been used to describe it. Mankind as a whole is unaware of the existence of the Coil and walks around oblivious to the dark ones. Also, it is quite more comprehensible to use only one word to describe it.

The most important thing to remember is that every realm, creature and torment is the physical representation of humanity’s collective urges, horrors, evils and forbidden fantasies. We have given them the tools to make us suffer due to our own vile natures. There is no real notion of a heaven or a hell in Noctum, only fears and ominous beliefs given physical form.

When it comes to using the Coil and the cosmology you should let your imagination run wild. Create the realms you need to give the players a good story. Use the unbound to create any type of creature that fits your story. Since they can take the form of virtually anything horrific you have a lot of leeway. Use this to your advantage, even if a player is familiar with the hidden world he can never know what to expect since the only thing limiting the psychology, powers, motivation and appearance of creatures and outlines of a realm is the imagination of the storyteller.

It is even possible to build your own myth; an entire race of creatures could have been born as a result of some ancient belief, living out their lives in realms representing that doctrine, bound to obey rules forced upon them at their creation. See styles of play for more information (Storyteller & Experience Chapter).

The word “soul” is frequently used, but even if it has strong religious connotations it is simply put in use in order to describe what is left after we pass. In other words, it isn’t meant to inspire thoughts of religious faith when used in Noctum, only to describe a form that lingers after a human body dies. No one has any real insight whether those who pass into the “unknown” actually pass somewhere or if they are utterly destroyed. It is quite possible that being imprisoned in the Coil, ending up as a twisted half-breed or nourishment, is the only “afterlife” that lies in wait. No redemption, no absolution, no hope. Only damnation or nothingness.

*You would think that driving 109
mph or so into a wall would do it, but
no. I don't know what they want
from me. I found myself in the morgue
earlier tonight; I did things with
the bodies. I don't know why. This
time I went for the wrists. It's
bleeding like hell but they're pounding
on the goddamn door! I don't even
know why I'm writing, I made good on
my promise and killed my wife. I don't
even understand it. Fuck this.*

CHAPTER 12

A WORLD OF SHADOWS

They are divided into groups and they are involved in everything, the dark ones. We decided to be the pursuers for once so we deliberately used our credits cards at the motel and backed off, surveying our rooms from our car in the parking lot. It was my idea. After that drunken night of complete despondency I decided that I was tired of just letting those damn things roll right over me. And barely an hour after using our cards, a black sedan with tinted windows came roaring in. Two men and two women in dark suits got out as I filmed them. I suspected federal agents of some sort. Caleb ran their plates through a backdoor he has in a federal database. And I was right, they were DEA. Learning that these things have infiltrated our society at this level made me cringe. But after they left we followed them. They ended up down at the docks. They exited the car and continued on foot.

Caleb, not being the stealthiest, stayed in the car while Silak and I tailed the guys down to a loading dock where a large cargo carrier was anchored. Containers wearing the logo of Core Industries were being hoisted up onto the ship. I know that company, who doesn't? They are one of the largest providers of home electronics in the world. Is it a coincidence or could it be that the corporation itself has been infiltrated?

I studied the DEA agents through my lens. There was something off about them. Maybe I just imagined it but they felt wrong, like a group of inhuman creatures wearing stolen human skin. They spoke to the captain of the ship and then went aboard. I got perfect shots of them with my camera. We decided to withdraw; no way that we were going to sneak onboard that ship.

When we got back to the car we discovered that Caleb had broken into the agent's vehicle and scrolled through their GPS. Through this he had accessed their travel routes for the last couple of days. For a shut-in hacker, he showed a surprising aptitude for practical field work. I was impressed.

With the information downloaded to his computer we got into our own car and got the hell out of there. If we were lucky we might retrace the steps of our pursuers and hopefully it would lead us to some answers.

On the surface, the world of Noctum looks very much like our own, but the obscured corruption and the evils of the world lie beneath the surface. This chapter is meant to give some general information and inspiration that will help storytellers to visualize the grim reality of Noctum.

CORPORATIONS

Widespread and lucrative corporations have an enormous amount of influence. They use their vast monetary resources, not only to further their enterprises, but also to sway the political parties. With the right people in office, there is little they cannot do.

Greedy and immoral as they may be, most corporations are nothing more than businesses. But some are deeply involved with the dark ones and are used to further their malevolent ends.

Individuals that collaborate with the darkness give up their very humanity in exchange for power and influence. Several leading international corporations are controlled by unearthly beings that pull the strings from the shadows.

CORE INDUSTRIES

Core Industries is a multibillion-dollar corporation and is the leading provider of home entertainment systems. Their main production lines involve videogames, stereos and video and audio equipment. Products from Core Industries can be found in thirty percent of the households in developed countries.

One of their most popular merchandise in the gaming department is their game console Vortex 2.0. They have a strong and versatile game line for this entertainment unit, but it has gained its repute (and infamy among parents) for its gloomy RPGs and violent games. "Crimson Veil" is the most popular game ever developed for Vortex. This game is beautifully crafted and its explicit violence and gore are supported by mind-blowing graphics. The player takes on the role of a practitioner of the dark arts in modern times, hell-bent on collecting the souls of innocents in order to bring about the apocalypse. Many parents and psychologists have launched a number of complaints, as they believe the game causes violent behavior in some of the gamers.

Core Industries has branch offices in almost every major city in the United States, Asia and Europe, but their main office is in Seattle.

The company started out as a small chain of stores that sold radio equipment and was founded in 1959 by Benjamin J Core. After his death, he left the company to his son, Richard J Core.

Richard often appears on television talk shows where he gives rebuttals to the accusations concerning his game.



Some claim that several murders and shootings among young people were a direct result of the game. As no legal action can be taken against him he once urged young viewers to buy *Crimson Veil 4: In Blood There Is Life*. But still, Core Industries have a good reputation as they donate vast amount to charity.

Behind the Façade: In truth, Richard J Core is Benjamin J Core. Even as a young man he craved power above all else, and a woman named Catherine Eldridge bestowed him with more power than he could imagine.

Catherine visited him in 1967 and offered him all the riches in the world, and a long life in return for his undying devotion and loyalty. Benjamin, who was on the brink of bankruptcy, thought this strange woman was crazy but said yes as he had nothing to lose. Soon his business skyrocketed and he knew he belonged to Catherine.

Some years later she forced him to stage his own death and to murder his own son (who was twenty at the time). With the aid of arch-glyphic rituals, which she revealed to him, he managed to steal the life force of his son and also take his appearance. With this, his life was extended and he inherited the company impersonating his own son. Benjamin believes Catherine to be a demon of some sort and has no clue what she really is.

Benjamin is paranoid and afraid of losing his company. Physically he is in his late forties. His new son is twenty-five and soon he will slay him to steal his life force and appearance.

Catharine is really one of Ezrágon's many forms. Ezrágon has found a way to infuse dark energies into the *Crimson Veil* series, which in some cases makes the player violent or prone to psychotic breakdowns and murderous impulses. This is part of an experiment to gather dark energies through interactive medias.

Benjamin is none the wiser, and these days his soul is as black as coal, and he only cares about amassing more wealth and prolonging his life, no matter who gets hurt in the process. Core Industries donate charity money as a way to counterbalance the tarnished rumors of the Crimson series.

MOUNT TYER CONSTRUCTION

The employees of this global construction company are known for their speed and precision when executing contracts, no matter the scale of the project. Since the mid-seventies Mount Tyer Construction has provided its clients with suburban housings, industrial parks, and skyscrapers and has added its share to the skyline of several major cities.

The founder and CEO of the company is a man named Fredrik Eklöv. He founded the company in 1973 with the money he inherited from his father. In the early days the company was small and worked out of their Gothenburg office. As the years went by they expanded. Today they are responsible for twenty percent of the contracted constructions through out the world and have become a multi-billion-dollar industry.

As of late they have begun to turn their attention to the Middle East and assist in the rebuilding of cities that have fallen victim to the harrows of war.

Most people will recognize the name Mount Tyer since they have many constructions sites on the way. Fredrik Eklöv has only shown up a few times in interviews regarding his company's development. Their main office is still located in Gothenburg, but Fredrik spends most of his time in Manhattan or Tearfall City where two of their largest branch offices are located.

Behind the Façade: Fredrik Eklöv has since an early age been skilled at demonic ritual magic, and when Fredrik was twenty-five a demon named Buer appeared to him. In reality this demon was Ahriman himself in one of his many forms. Ahriman had found ancient arch-glyphic texts that describe how one could drain multiple humans, slowly, of dark energies. Ahriman needed a human to be able to use them. In the guise of Buer, he has given this knowledge to Fredrik.

By trapping souls of rapists and sadistic murderers inside certain relics they may be used to drain other humans of dark energies. Some of Fredrik's buildings are nothing more than huge artifacts with the sole purpose of draining energies. Fredrik has etched certain arch glyphs into the girders of these buildings. These symbols hold dark souls. The torments of these souls pour out over the inhabitants causing nightmares, depressions and anxiety. Fredrik who uses them in his rituals then draws the energy to himself. What he doesn't know is that Ahriman uses up most of the energy for his own ends. The buildings that are used in this

manner have a large crystal hidden away on the top floors. These are the hearts of the relics and if they are destroyed all the souls will be freed, passing into the unknown.

BLAKE & AMES

As one of America's most successful law firms they have vast resources at their disposal. Jonathan Blake and Gary Ames founded the firm in 1966 in Boston. The firm was barely scraping by at this time. In 1981 the children of the founders, Daniel Blake and Elisa Ames, took over the company. Ten years later they had made a name for themselves and business was good. In 1995 they had opened branch offices in New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Seattle, and Tearfall City.

The firm mainly takes on large disputes involving successful companies. This is their main source of income, but they also specialize in handling the defense of criminals, and the firm has a rotating schedule that makes every lawyer act as a public defender on a monthly basis. They are known for getting the worst criminals off the hook. Also, they make quite a bit of money off several organized crime rings in the role as their legal advisors and defenders. Most people have heard the name Blake & Ames since they appear on television in many high profile cases.

Behind the Façade: Soon after Daniel and Elisa had taken over the company they got a client. He needed help with a building permit. Daniel and Elisa went out to the old cabin to look at the place and take notes on some measurements. As Daniel was walking the grounds he fell down a well, hidden under the grass beneath some old rotten planks. He wasn't injured, but what he didn't know was that this well had been magically sealed for over a hundred years. A practitioner of demonology had enclosed the two unruly demons Eligos and Agares in the well. Now they were free and so, they possessed the young lawyers. Eligos took up residence in Daniel and Agares forced his way inside the soul of Elisa.

These creatures believe themselves to be demons and serve an even greater demon named Malphas who resides in a Hellhole he has controlled for the last thousand years. Through the law firm they try to release sinners to further the corruption of man. Agares and Eligos use their powers and knowledge to win cases and (sometimes in the full meaning of the word) to eliminate competition.

During the last couple of years Eligos and Agares have employed the service of many Sinners Companions to aid them in their cause. The firm has four additional partners besides Daniel and Elisa. Cynthia Cold and Peter Fletcher have worked their way up and they are Sinners Companions, which have helped them gain the prestigious and influential position. Jericho Crane and Adriana Lugosi are humans but well honed in the art of demonology. These make up the backbone of the firm, working out of their main office in Tearfall City.

Blake & Ames help both main factions of the dark ones. Both Ahriman and the Harbingers have used them to aid their minions. They would prefer that only one of them had power over the firm but as these demons do a good job, since a takeover would probably result in the annihilation of the firm, they let them continue their work.

Most of the people working for Blake & Ames are humans and unaware of the dark forces that walk the corridors of the firm's upper echelons. Eligos and Agares are searching for new hosts as the human bodies they inhabit are beginning to grow old.

AGENCIES

Secret agencies are a breeding ground for corruption and deceit. A hidden world of bloodstained conspiracies goes unseen, buried under layers of obfuscation. Politically motivated assassinations and high-end blackmail are common in these dangerous and hidden regions of power.

Corrupt agents of the NSA sometimes use their resources to gather information in order to squeeze money out of rich businessmen. The CIA goes abroad to burn fields of cocaine only to lie about the numbers, pocketing large amounts for themselves, in order to sell it to organized crime back home. For the right amount of money, immoral agents of the FBI plant evidence to nail the competition of faceless politicians. Most of those working for these organizations are honest, but many in key positions are not. Of course, minions of the dark ones walk the halls of the headquarters of many intelligence agencies. Beyond the known agencies there are even more secretive and dangerous groups.

BRANCH 94

This secretive agency has the support of the US government but only a handful of people know they exist; even less have an idea as to what they do. It was during the late fifties that this group came to be. More and more agents from every intelligence agency reported strange occurrences of an inexplicable nature. To investigate these things the American government founded Branch 94. The name comes from the number of plausible reports that motivated the creation of the agency.

Branch 94 is made up of agents that have been headhunted from different agencies. Skill and merit aren't the only things that get someone hired, agents that have filed a "94" are more likely to get hired. A report containing unexplained occurrences that bears some merit and likeness to those reports that founded the agency is deemed a "94".

Goals and Motivation: Branch 94 works in total anonymity, using people in key positions and fake identifications for their agents depending on the situation. With their influence and contacts they can get warrants and the authorization to take over investigations.



They strive to hide their findings because they fear that humanity would be plunged into fear and chaos if they knew that something alien and unearthly existed. As they don't understand what is going on themselves they wish to learn more of the strange things that goes on in the world.

Agents working for Branch 94 are never told much, and their findings and reports are sealed and locked away. The agency knows that something is wrong but they don't know what. The most popular theory is that the few and horrible creatures they have encountered are some form of mutation. As of yet, only questionable and sketchy reports of another dimension have surfaced. Of course, their work is highly confidential and agents aren't allowed to discuss their work with anyone outside the agency. Every employee of this group officially works for Barstow Security, a company that acts as a front for the agency. They are most widespread in the USA, but investigate occurrences all over the world.

What They Don't Know: From the beginning, Ahriman has controlled the group. Ahriman got wind of the organization a few years after it was created and realized that he could kill two birds with one stone. First of all, humanity couldn't be allowed to learn the truth so he had to step in; secondly he understood that he could use the organization to sabotage the work of his brothers and track down the unbound. Ahriman sees to it that the agency spends a lot of time hiding bodies that have been slain by creatures and display too many uncanny marks and wounds to be written off as "normal" murders or accidents.

As those with influence in the group are minions of Ahriman, nothing really gets out. Once in a while he lets smaller things be known so that the work of the group is deemed necessary, thus getting the continued support of the government. Agents who ask too many questions might find themselves missing, never to be seen again.

STYX

This secretive agency borders on a sect as their inner circle practice the dark arts. The name Styx is taken from Greek mythology, and is the name of the river of the dead that souls have to pass before moving on. The organization views the name as a symbol, a line between light and darkness, life and death. Styx goes back nearly two hundred years and has its roots in the Freemasonry lodges that existed in Germany in the 1800s.

During the Dark Ages of Europe a lot of people practiced ritual magic. Some of these groups and their work lived on into more modern times. The Masonic Lodges charged a group of men to investigate, and unearth, these organizations and their secrets in order to eliminate them as a threat to the Order of Freemasonry. This group of men discovered the art of true magic and the dark arts through this.

The Order of Freemasonry had a lot of different rituals and ceremonies, but these were only for show and a means to strengthen the bonds of members, and had nothing to do with real magic. The investigating group on the other hand learned of real magic and its uses. They realized that this could grant the Masonic Order even more power and so they presented their leaders with a petition, to incorporate real magic into Freemasonry. The petition was rejected, scornfully. Their leaders were men of logic and of the Church and would have nothing to do with the ancient and "flawed" theories of the past. With that, the investigative group had to continue to work as informants.

But their determination and strength of will were only hardened by the rejection. In obscurity they collected rituals, relics and other artifacts of magical power, saying nothing to their leaders. After some years had passed they had amassed a vast amount of occult material. Finally they conducted a ritual to summon forth a demon that would bestow them with infinite power.

Kalathia was the name of the denizen summoned forth. She instructed them in new ways of magic, which gave them power and riches. They broke free from the Masonic Order, working towards their own dark ends.

In their freedom and with the aid of magic they managed to gain influence on a political and governmental level. Due to this, they grew and became more structured. But they understood the dangers of granting magical knowledge to others, as they could lose control of the group if others challenged their base of power, and so, they formed the inner circle. This circle consisted of the twelve original men who had severed the bonds with Freemasonry and a handful of trusted servants. But they still needed a vast network. To make it all come together they recruited members with the pretense that Styx was an organization that foiled the plans, and onslaught, of dangerous occult sects and cults. In reality, the twelve original members eradicated any organization that could be viewed as a threat, while stealing their knowledge and power.

In modern times this group sells itself as an investigation consultant firm that specializes in serial killers, cult member deprogramming and the investigation of suspected paranormal activities. They hire from all walks of life ranging from ex-police officers, FBI agents and acclaimed psychics. Styx mostly works as a consultant firm for the police department and FBI, but also offers its services to civilians (with deep pockets). They have highly prized, and valued, expertise of sects, serial killers and paranormal phenomena. Hired personnel are never made aware of the group's real goal: Power and control gained by using the dark arts. Operatives of Styx believe they simply work for a highly prized investigation firm, but the inner circle continues to build their power base, exterminating all threats they find. Styx has several branch offices all over the world.

The twelve members of the inner circle are spread across twelve countries where they oversee different branches. Once a year, on the fourth of October (the date of the official founding) they meet in Florence to discuss their plans and to summon Kalathtia. Today, the members of the inner circle are the descendants of the original founders.

Goals and Motivations: Besides crushing organizations that may become a threat and gather occult knowledge, the inner circle has another goal. As they are capable and knowledgeable of the dark arts they are privy to a vast amount of rituals. They have summoned and seen several of the dark ones, believing them to be some kind of demons from a parallel dimension. As they believe in another realm of existence they are now trying to reach that place in order to enter the world of these unholy creatures. It is their belief that they may tap this realm of an astounding amount of magical power. Also, they believe this to be the world of the dead and they wish to find, and bring back, their ancestors in hopes of strengthening the organization and their power as a whole. To this day, they have not succeeded.

What They Don't Know: Kalathtia is an Alsekthaal, given a unique ability to appear through a summoning ritual by its masters. The creature serves the Harbingers devotedly. It has been controlling the inner circle since the beginning. Kalathtia's goal is to try and open the rift to the other side using humans knowledgeable of arch-glyphic rituals. If she were successful, it would bring the reaping closer. This Alsekthaal is a particularly powerful and knowledgeable one, and hasn't been influenced by humans as much as most Alsekthaals.

CULTS & SECTS

Throughout human history the world has always been filled with lost individuals, who desperately cling to whatever faith or group that comes along, in hope of ridding themselves of responsibilities or the need of independent decision-making. Most of these groups are relatively harmless, but often take a share of the member's paycheck. Some are friendly, wishing to heal humanity and nature as a whole while others engage in sexual abuse, arms dealing and outright slavery. However, few have any actual unearthly power or have seen specks of the truth.

Unfortunately, in the world of Noctum, there are some really dangerous, fanatical and powerful sects that wield supernatural power, gained from their collaboration with the dark ones. None of these sects knows the entire truth; they are manipulated into believing different doctrines of human invention, or view the world through other obscure beliefs. But still they hide among us in every walk of life.

LIAKARETH

Liakareth goes back nine hundred years and was brought into existence by a man named Adam Krölnch in the 1100s of medieval Germany. Krölnch was a rich merchant and also owned several mines. One day the miners reported a strange finding in one of the deeper mines. He followed them to investigate and found an ancient chamber.

Hundreds of symbols of unknown origin covered the walls. Krölnch tried to interpret the symbols and soon became obsessed with them. He later discovered that the symbols weren't a language but a code.

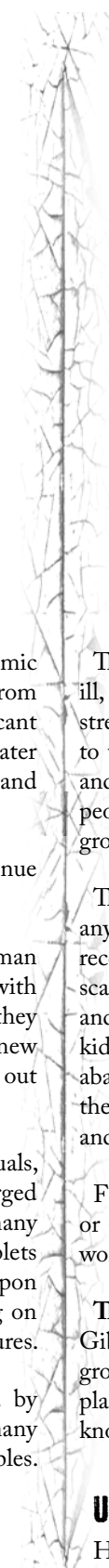
He stayed up for days at a time and spent several months in the mine, only reemerging to eat. His dreams and his waken hours were clouded by the strangest dreams and visions of a dark and gloomy landscape of twisted statues, and temples filled with horrific, yet intriguing unnatural creatures.

Soon he deciphered the symbols and they spoke of the realm of Liakareth, a world of shadow where creatures of gloom dwelled. Not long thereafter he saw a pattern in the deciphered symbols that divulged a map, leading to what was described as a key with which one could open the gates to Liakareth and gain control over the dark entities. Krölnch set out to find the key. After unearthing texts in France he found out that the key itself was a ritual that required nine silver tablets inscribed with symbols of power.

After fifteen years he had managed to collect three of the tablets and many followers had joined him in his quest. At each location in which he discovered a tablet, he also found a puzzle or a riddle pointing to the next find, but each tablet proved harder and harder to find. These clues were incredibly complex and took a long time to untangle. The tablets themselves are filled with instructions on how to perform several rituals and vile occult experiments. This enabled the group to summon several creatures of Liakareth.

During the nine hundred years that have passed since Krölnch first found the tablets the sect has changed leaders several times, and developed advanced rules and protocols of obscurity. There are many levels of power and acknowledgement in the sect but the three most vital titles are the Guide, Wanderers and the Finders.

The Guide is the leader of the whole sect and his word is law. He is the only one knowledgeable enough to use the full powers of the tablets. The Wanderers are the ones in charge of the individual houses into which the sect is divided. Wanderers report directly to the Guide, but basically exert autonomous control of their individual house and are skilled in the darker arts of ritualistic magic. Finders are highly trained soldiers that handle the security and martial duties of the sect. They act as assassins, bodyguards and spies. Some of them have been bestowed power by Liakareth, making them far stronger and harder than a normal human.



Liakareth has generated a large amount of economic resources during the years as many members come from old money families. Its search has also led to significant archeological finds which in turn have led to even greater profits as they have sold them to private collectors and museums.

They have gathered six out of nine tablets and continue to search tirelessly.

Many of their summoning rituals demand human sacrifices and the members of the sect has no qualms with committing murder as a part of their faith or when they need to get rid of any potential threats. Bartholomew Heinrich is the name of the current Guide who works out of the sect's main house in Berlin.

The Real Story: The tablets contain arch-glyphic rituals, which open a gateway to the Coil if they are merged and they also grant the one using them sway over many creatures. Besides this, the bringing together of all tablets would unleash several Powerful creatures of darkness upon the world. Liakareth has no idea what is really going on and believes that it will be able to control all the creatures.

Several of the Finders have become so tarnished by dark power that they have turned into Adepts and many Wanderers and some members have twisted into Disciples.

THE HIDDEN

The Hidden goes under several names such as “those in the shadows”, “the unseen” and “the forgotten”. The Hidden are one of the most unorganized and scattered of all sects and cults. Only during the last twenty years or so have they been able to develop some kind of structure.

The Hidden are made up of the homeless, the mentally ill, drug addicts and a wide assortment of broken-down street people. They meet in back alleys, sacrificing animals to their gods, and sometimes indulge in human sacrifices and cannibalism. Only the most desperate and depraved people are allowed to join and most fall naturally into the group.

They are spread across the slums of the world without any connection to each other. Members of the Hidden recognize each other by identifying ritual burns and scarring. They worship a breed of subterranean creatures and the god of filth and depravity. In a show of faith they kidnap people and leave them in catacombs, tunnels and abandoned houses where their gods show up to receive their sacrifice. Members hope of one day joining their gods and some sacrifice themselves to this end.

Fire, blood, scarification, and jewelry made from human or animal bones are common paraphernalia used in their worship.

The Real Story: The Hidden worship Eryls and Gibarachs. In certain cases the Gibarach lead some groups. During particular dates they kidnap people and place them as sacrifices; somehow they always seem to know when their gods will show up.

UNHOLY REVERENDS

Hidden away in forgotten societies in the backwaters of human civilization these wretches live out their existence. Unholy Reverends aren't a group as such. Rather, the name describes a race of dark creatures that live in isolated societies in a similar fashion and pray to the same blasphemous gods.

Worshiping these gods grants the Unholy health, longevity, inhuman strength and magical powers. But many of them are horribly deformed.

Unholy Reverends are fairly uncommon in this day and age but here and there, hidden in small towns not even on the map, they thrive and live out their foul existence. The Unholy are cannibals (of sorts since they are barely human anymore) and sacrifice and feast on the blood and flesh of outsiders if given a chance.

Behind locked doors and windows nailed shut in their rundown towns, macabre altars filled with human and animal body parts are hidden. In some rooms you can find twisted and ghoulish collections of human organs and limbs, often gnawed upon or formed into perverse and revolting works of art. Usually they have several walkways connecting one roof to another and an intricate network of tunnels and catacombs under their streets. Those twisted beyond human form may move unseen using these passages. Those who still can pass for human try to keep up the appearances of normality.

A pungent smell, resembling that of a slaughterhouse on a warm day, and the stench of putridity hang in the air since many of the underground tunnels and hidden places are filled with decomposing flesh and other types of rotting waste. Many of these societies don't even have any electricity installed from main lines and rely on gas generators to make their own. Needless to say, they seldom have working phones.

The Real Story: Unholy worship Spawn of Vaakals or Golnagoths, believing them to be gods of old, possessing infinite power. In exchange for the powers and longevity the members sacrifice humans to appease their masters. The dark ones sometimes use them as a small source of dark energy, also as a way of having eyes and ears in the most remote places of society.

Dear Casey

I was driving down to my folks' place this weekend and decided to take the scenic route. They live in Charleston, West Virginia, so you can imagine the backwater roads you can find while getting there. In any event, I ended up driving forever and I was quite lost. But then I came across a small town named Crows Hill. I never heard of it before. You should see this place. It's like a time capsule.

I'm telling you, the place is stuck in the 1940s or something. It was all rundown and I saw about five people all in all, including the guy at the gas station. From what I could tell, there had been some heavy inbreeding going on there. Those townsfolk ogled me with their bulging eyes. It was like they hadn't seen a stranger for years. I stayed two hours or so and took a look around.

The place has a weird feel to it, and it smells rather foul, like old decomp or something. One thing in particular caught my attention, and that was the church. The cross was gone and replaced with some utterly weird looking rune-like silver icon, and all the windows were boarded up. I went over to get a closer look but then this kid, a girl, came out of nowhere and said I was an "infidel". She looked all sick and pale. She stared strangely at me and to be honest it freaked me out. After that I just left.

But the place got my interest. As you know, I'm about to write my final thesis in anthropology, so when I got back home, I got cracking, doing some research. It seems as if Crows Hill doesn't exist. Not after 1902. I dug around the Church archives. If I got it right, the place was founded in 1698. It was a rather prosperous farming town until 1769. A huge fire swept across the town and destroyed most of it. After this there are no records (that I could find) until 1832. Crows Hill was up and running again but soon the priest (a Father Cavallera) was murdered. They never found the one who did it.

Then the records are quite sporadic, consisting mostly of bits and pieces up until 1902. If I got it right, four more priests were either killed or went missing. After this the Church actually blacklisted the town and crossed it out of the books. There are no modern references to Crows Hill anywhere. Do you understand what this could mean? This is a town that has lived disconnected from the modern world for decades. From an anthropological viewpoint this is astonishing! I have decided to do an in-depth study of the place and live there for a while to observe and to gather information. It's quite possible that they even have their own religion.

I leave in two days, and I just know I will be able to write an extremely unique thesis paper; probably even one that may get published, which could lead to that grant I've been gunning for. Do me a favor and keep this quiet; I don't want the rest of the university camping out in Crows Hill. If anyone asks I'm in Canada visiting my cousin. I'll be in touch in a couple of weeks. "The Forgotten Amongst Us" - how's that for a title! Take care and good luck on your term paper.

Regards,
Matthew Brimley

THE POWERS THAT BE

Beyond the three sects described there are four other sects that wield immense power, far greater than the others. None of these has seen the full extent of the truth either but is closer than the others. Two of these sects are the tools of Ahriman and the Harbingers.

HOSTIS HVMANI GENERIS

This phrase has been used throughout history to describe the status of criminals (especially pirates and today terrorists) but unknown to most is the fact that it was first uttered by an evil cult as it named itself. Hostis Hvmani Generis is Latin and translates as “the enemy of mankind” or “the enemy against all mankind”. This is the name of the cult serving under the Harbingers. These days they simply call themselves Hostis (Enemy).

When it comes to beliefs and doctrine, the foundation of this group is devil worship (not to be confused with Satanism), chaos adherence and demonic reverence. They call the Harbingers by their demonic earthly names and believe them to be the devil in different forms. Hostis members have been manipulated to think that the Harbingers will rule the earth if they succeed and that Hostis will rule with them side by side. They have no knowledge of the Reaping and that it will extinguish all human life from the face of the earth.

One can never become a member by searching them out, asking to join, rather people fall naturally into it (or are taken and indoctrinated at times). Only those with pure evil in their hearts, those who have no objections against killing their immediate family for example, can become members. They might take others from time to time to use as tools though. Individuals that work for Hostis range from psychotic mass murderers, serial killers, rapists, to teachers and company directors suffering from sociopathic and narcissistic tendencies and murderous impulses.

The most aggressive, uncontrollable and crazed members are used as foot soldiers while the more balanced members perform rituals and handle the more subtle parts of the organization.

Hostis have vast resources as they have the direct support of the Harbingers and their frontrunners. These can easily provide the group with weapons, narcotics and a lot of other assets.

Hostis actively hunt down unbound with the purpose of exterminating them or force them to join their masters. Members believe that these creatures are demons that have escaped the service of the devil and so they have to be hunted down and brought back to their rightful place. They know the name of Ahriman as well and he has been integrated into their belief system by the Harbingers as a powerful demon that betrayed the devil, thus making him the sworn enemy of the cult.

It stands to reason that their assets and strength of numbers would make it easy for them to dispose of their enemies. This, however, is not the case. To be able to perform the heinous acts that they do and to provide the Harbingers with the worship they require, members need to be utterly evil. There are a lot of evil people out there but most of them, including those that join Hostis, are quite insane. It is very hard to organize a large group of aggressive psychopaths, many suffering from a mental illness as well.

Hostis doesn't have any real structure as such and is divided into smaller cells. Often they aren't aware of the size of the cult, thinking it is only a small gathering of people. Groups of any given city or region is under the control of a Mendroloth who communicates with the Harbingers through a Vaakal. Some of the members have become Adepts or Disciples.

Besides unwittingly trying to instigate the Reaping they ardently fight Prometheus and Agnus Dei. Their masters also use them to eliminate those who come too close to the truth.

Some Hostis members don't even know that they are members. The Harbingers speak to them through their insanity, giving the orders. Most that are caught are incapable of revealing anything that might expose the cult since “the voices in my head told me to do it” isn't a very compelling argument. “Stable” members that have been caught never divulge anything since they know that time in jail is nothing compared to what their masters will do to them if they betray them. Few of them fear death since they think that they will be given a position of power in hell if they die; few understand that they are more likely to just pass into the unknown or be tortured in one of the seven kingdoms until devoured.

Smaller sects that kill as a group, kids that murder their parents, spree killers and many similar individuals have often been members of Hostis, one way or another, and the public are none the wiser.

Methods that members use to deal with their enemies vary greatly. More civilized members use staged suicides or outright assassinations, those endowed with magical powers summon forth creatures to do their bidding while psychotic and utterly insane individuals grab an axe and knock on the door of those they wish to kill.

Sooner or later, members are taught the alphabet known as Infernal Lettering. This isn't a spoken language and is only used as a way to communicate short messages. The lettering is a chaotic combination of Aramaic and Sanskrit. Symbols of these two languages have been woven together and given new meanings. They are painted and marked out on subtle places in cities, and act as markers to the closest Hostis gathering place. Big meetings and their locations are often marked out in this way.

Big meetings can be held anywhere, condemned houses, sewer tunnels, aqueducts or a posh hotel suite if the one calling the meeting has the resources. Hostis members use a wide range of ceremonies to show their loyalties to each other and their masters. Human sacrifices, torture and sexual abuse are common ingredients in their ceremonies. Many Hostis cells have connections or people among social workers and child services to keep their supply of sacrifices “fresh”.

Hostis have an “elite force” of sorts and it is composed of the most crazed psychopaths, mass murderers and serial killers imaginable. These have lost all their sanity and have let all the evil of the Harbingers into their hearts; the voice of their masters is the only thing keeping them in check. Without this influence they would surely run amok, killing each other as well. These individuals are known as Chosen but are nicknamed Bogeymen even among their peers because of their unique powers and extreme natures. They are used to deal with especially important tasks where failure is not an option.

When it comes to leadership the cult members only take orders from the Mendroloth who is leading their cell. Only the largest cells have a leader to guide them, smaller ones make do by listening to the maddening voices of the Harbingers that echo in their thoughts and dreams. A small Hostis cell is usually composed of four to twenty members while the largest cells can have as few as thirty to as many as a hundred members.

PROMETHEUS

Prometheus is the pride of Ahriman and his most reliable legion of humans on our plane of existence. The year was 1223 when this sect drew its first breath. It all begun in France when a man named Luc Devillon set out to change the world. Even though his twisted experiments have inspired generations of members little is known of what really happened and how a faith was built around his work. The only things that tell the tale of this man are an excerpt from his journal and some of his remains.

Exactly what happened to Luc Devillon is unclear; the only thing that is known for certain is the fact that he later died. His unnatural and twisted spine can be found locked behind a dome of tempered glass, encrusted in a layer of gold deep within the sect’s leading base of operations in the outskirts of Moscow. This is the most important relic of the sect. Also, there are no records of the original founders and how a sect came to be as a result of his work. The historians of the sect theorize that he used more and more people in his experiments and as helpers, and that these carried on his work when he passed.

Some eighty years after Devillon’s first experiments, Ahriman learned about the group and took an interest in their esoteric views and doctrines and goals. Prometheus wished to become one with the demons, and wanted to change those deserving into something more than human.

Ahriman saw the potential and set out to make them into loyal servants.

Ahriman sent dreams to some of the sect members and showed them visions of the seven kingdoms of his scornful brothers. He concocted a myth; he portrayed the Harbingers as the jailors of the demons and convinced members that some of the demons, those who still remembered, wished to reach out to the sect in order to become free. His involvement made the sect wage war on Hostis, as these were the minions of the unjust jailors. During the years they continued to conduct heinous and perverted alchemical and magical experiments in order to fuse man with creature.

Centuries passed and the enlightenment of the Renaissance was upon them. Ahriman adapted the belief of the sect as time passed, shaving off those teachings he thought were to stagnant, replacing them with those more suited to his needs. Prometheus managed to create half-breeds and learned of the Coil, and so they became a dangerous enemy to Hostis. Of course they also learned of Agnus Dei and hostilities between these groups were inevitable.

In the late 16th century they began to use their power to further their economic and political influence as well. Some members of Prometheus come from families who have been members for generations, amassing wealth of both knowledge and valuables. Beside the influence and power of the group itself they unknowingly had the support of the Vaakals Ahriman controlled.

At the end of the 17th century Ahriman had radically changed the doctrine of Prometheus. They were now made to believe that the demons once were the servants of mankind. Seven of the most powerful ones had escaped and created their own kingdoms, forcing the lesser demons into servitude in order to enslave mankind. Prometheus had now become a powerful tool with a deep-rooted hatred for the seven kings. Like his brothers, Ahriman manipulates his human minions into servitude. When the science of genetics was discovered, Ahriman incorporated the use of this as well into the group, conducting many horrible experiments in the Nazi death camps. The evil of mankind had given Prometheus a perfect opportunity to perform the vilest and most twisted experiments basically unchecked.

Today the group has kept much of its beliefs, believing the dark ones to be demons and viewing the Coil as an infernal prison, created by the seven kings. Prometheus have the conception that only those who know the “truth” of reality are knowledgeable enough to control the demons and through them control mankind.

Due to their old-blood money families and accumulated wealth they have vast resources. They have wriggled their way into institutions that engage in genetic research on the highest levels and use their technology to create half-breeds.

Prometheus is a powerful sect and tries to accumulate both military and scientific resources to further their ends. They strive to rid the world of the seven unruly demons that had the audacity to break away from the servitude of man in order to imprison the demons, forcing them into servitude as a means of enslaving mankind itself.

In the end, Prometheus wishes to rule the earth by military force and the support of half-breeds to make it (according to their standards) a perfect world. Of course, Ahriman would not let this happen, as he knows that humanity would never stand for it, but he dangles the prospect of domination as a meaty bone in front of a ravenous dog to motivate the sect. Their efforts help him stop his brothers from instigating the Reaping.

To aid them they have created a special military branch called Atlas. In myth, Atlas was the brother of Prometheus who carried the weight of the world on his shoulders. As these men and women stand between the organization and its enemies, so do they carry a heavy weight of responsibility.

Of course they work, as the other groups, in total obscurity. They are highly organized and careful, bordering on the paranoid. They have access to the most advanced research and military equipment. Ofelia Fletcher is the current leader of the group, and unknown to all is the fact she is one of Ahriman's physical forms on our plane of existence. This lets him control his sect directly, leaving all the members unaware that they are headed by a supernatural being.

They often use research facilities as fronts; at other times they hide their locales within old mansions and castles owned by old-money members. Some spaces are laboratories while others are ancient-looking chambers that contain relics and archaic writings.

Prometheus: Passage I

I am no longer a human being, I have become something else entirely. My corporeal form has twisted and become monstrous. My nails are long and tough, sharp as the talons of a wild beast; my skin is harder than the tempered leather on the back of a soldier. Even my mind has grown dark, filled with the most sinful and vile thoughts. The things I have seen inside my soul would churn even the innards of devils.

The experiment was meant to conjure a demon, a creature summoned forth to obey. Something went terribly wrong; the circle of invocation and protection did not hold. This is the price all men of self-righteousness will pay for their delusions of grandeur!

From the pits of the deepest hells it came, hideous and contemptible, summoned by my own words. It was free from the chains of obedience, I was sure my final moment had come! But it did not tear me from limb to limb as I thought it would. Nay, it entered my very flesh and soul!

Yet, my unrelenting strength of spirit would not let it take me over. Still, I can hear it even now, whispering in my soul. But it took my flesh, and as God created man in his image ever so does this creature twist me into an image of itself, as I am horrible and loathsome to look upon. Even if my spirit is strong, it takes me from time to time.

In the beginning I did everything in my power to become human again. Countless were those who perished in my rituals and experiments to achieve my end! I even tried to infuse my now putrid blood into them; I wanted to see if they could stifle the dark heritage of the horror inside me.

Prometheus: Passage II

The undiluted power! I have realized that I have ascended, reborn as something more than a mere mortal! My experiments have continued and one night my other half, my dark half, entered a woman I had taken to my laboratory to use in my work. She changed, much as I did and she too has become more than a human! She shared my thoughts, obeying and bending to my will. I understood, as Prometheus brought fire to the race of man, so I have brought darkness to their hearts! We can ascend, shedding our weak flesh. A new age is upon us!

AGNUS DEI

This group is a remnant from the time of the inquisition. The group was forged in the darkness of 13th century France and adopted the name Agnus Dei, which is Latin meaning “the Lamb of God”. They were relentless in their hunt for heretics and many were those who burned in the fires of misguided righteousness.

Agnus Dei traveled far and wide in their calling, squashing all they believed to be allies of the Devil. Due to wars and change in the political climate, the group was disbanded by the powers that be in the Year of Our Lord 1255. So they found themselves abandoned, holy knights without a mission. Some would not bend and broke free, becoming an independent group answering to no one. They rode hard, continuing their mission in the service of God.

Some years later the sons of these hardy men had taken upon themselves to take on the legacy of their fathers, devoted to their faith. But Agnus Dei did nothing more than engage in slaughter; blinded by faith they killed the innocent, unaware of the real evil that was at work in the world. Without their calling, they had no purpose and so they were incessant in their work. The Church let them ride on since Agnus Dei only slaughtered and wreaked havoc on smaller villages of little or no significance. Also, the fear they instilled and the stories they spread kept the people in check.

At the end of the 13th century Agnus Dei found themselves in the northern regions of France. They had heard rumors telling of heretics and legions of the Devil running unchecked in a small village. Once again they saw an opportunity to do the work of God and rode fast through the night. But what they didn't know was that a sect called Prometheus had conducted a horrid experiment on some of the villagers.

The sight that met them as they arrived filled them with dread; for the first time they saw the work of the Devil, or so they believed. The dead had risen from their graves and in the shadows even worse beings lurked. Half of the lambs of God fled, never again picking up a sword; those who stayed did so rejoicing. There *was* real evil in the world, giving their calling substance! And so they went to battle.

Many were the lambs of God that went to the slaughter, dying gruesomely, but in the end they won, defeating the legions of the Devil. Those who survived knew they couldn't tell the Church of what happened, such a story would surely be deemed as heresy and they would be judged and sentenced accordingly. Understanding this, they made everyone believe they had given up their quest, secretly hunting the real evils of the world.

Generations of these men (and of late women) were born and died and during this time the sect grew. They learned of humans capable of summoning minions of hell



and of vile creatures stalking the dark corners of the earth. During the centuries that passed they stumbled upon different heretical cults, Liakareth, Hostis and of course Prometheus.

Agnus Dei still had strong ties to the Church, infiltrating institutions as a means to gain resources, and several of their members had reached positions of power within the clerical sphere, giving them access to economic assets as well.

As they have clashed with several sects and cults they have learned some of their beliefs. Agnus Dei is convinced that the seven kings of sin are the most trusted minions of the Devil, the Coil is viewed as Purgatory or Limbo, a world between life and death. They also think of many dark ones as the heirs and children of the demon Azazel, making them Nephilim, fallen angels that, in the doctrine of Agnus Dei, serve the devil himself.

All use of magic of any kind is strictly forbidden within the group but they compensate by having a large number of powerful psychics and practitioners of different telekinetic abilities in their midst. These are given the highest respect and are thought of as chosen by God to do his work, vanquishing evil. The reason behind the staggering number of powerful psychics and telekinetically endowed has more to do with biology and the manipulation of the social structure of the sect than anything else. They constantly arrange marriages between those that possess

these abilities, and even hunt down psychics to use them as breeders after indoctrinating them. In other words, they engaged in a sick and twisted breeding program in the name of God.

In the early 1900s they were about to be given a tool that would let them become more influential and powerful than they could have possibly imagined. The year was 1928, the second of October, when Josemaria Escrivá founded Opus Dei (the Work of God). Opus Dei has grown into an enormously powerful and influential institution and has been declared an independent church by the Vatican. By some, Opus Dei is viewed as an orthodox and somewhat stagnant religious organization and has been suspected to be a front for right-wing political agendas. Agnus Dei has infiltrated this unsuspecting group on every level, giving themselves a global network and unfathomable amounts of resources. Beyond granting them resources, Opus Dei is an excellent institution from which they may recruit more members.

Agnus Dei constantly battles all that they consider evil and have had several encounters with the dark ones. Their goal is to institute a new inquisition, ridding the world of all sinners and those touched by darkness. Agnus Dei members are crazed fanatics and think of any use of magic, to whatever end, as blasphemous and stomp out those who engage in the practice. In their blind faith they also believe that those who know the truth (that legions of hell walk the earth and that magic is real) should be eliminated. Their reasoning is that those that do *not* possess the faith of Agnus Dei will be corrupted by such knowledge, becoming servants of evil themselves. This is their twisted view of things. Of course, they don't eliminate everyone they consider a heretic or corrupted because it would expose the organization, but those that know *too* much are taken care of if possible.

Many members are theologians and academic researchers that search for the truth in old and dusty manuscripts; others are violent fanatics, psychopaths that are as sick as the ones they hunt. When they run across particularly violent and important antagonists or problems they call upon the Zealots. These highly trained and fervent assassins are endowed with powerful psychic abilities and act as the elite martial branch of Agnus Dei.

In order to continue their work they stay hidden but can often act very openly, taking on the guise of everyday religious institutions and groups. They can be found on every continent and may use private jets, cars and whatever else they need disguised as men of an open faith. Using their contacts within the UN they have access to military resources as well. Agnus Dei have been quite good at finding and exterminating dark ones that infiltrate them; and due to this, and their religiously crazed hunt, they have become quite a problem for the dark ones. But yet, they are a danger to mankind itself as they view most as heretics and sinners that deserve to die by the sword.

In their hunt for the legions of Satan they have become extremely good at performing exorcisms and have an order known as the Banishers that specializes in the art of expelling demons. Crazed and blind to all but their faith they frantically fight heretics and the forces of evil. All that oppose them are the sworn enemy of God and shall burn in the eternal flames of hell for all eternity!

WHERE ARE THEY?

With all these insane groups around one would think that they would have been noticed. They may be fanatical, insane and malevolent but they are not stupid. Whenever they act openly they do so in the guise of something else. A clash between soldiers of the UN and the militia of a war-ridden country may be Agnus Dei launching a strike against Hostis. An act of terrorism aimed at a military base might as well be Prometheus sabotaging a laboratory belonging to a potential competitor. Defilement of churches and spree killers that regularly attack these institutions might be Bogeymen of Hostis acting against Agnus Dei. We hear of them everyday as they hide in plain sight.

Each one of the sects and cults has their own doctrine involving the Coil, not knowing the real truth. Sometimes they battle each other even in the Coil. But something that always should be remembered is the fact that none of the groups (not the ones running them behind the scenes at least) seeks to destroy mankind. The Harbingers will in the end, if they have their way, eradicate the human species but at the moment they need us to survive.

HOW TO USE THEM

The idea is that these organizations mainly will act as antagonists and as such the characters shouldn't be allowed to join any of the sects. Some of the corporations and agencies are "user-friendly" so to speak, as the characters can join them, not knowing what hides beneath the façade and bit-by-bit they may discover the truth at the peril of their own lives.

Care should always be taken when including these organizations. It would be no fun if you toss every group at the characters and riddle society with their minions. Compared to the rest of humanity, members of these groups make up a small number and do their best to stay hidden.

A whole chronicle can lead up to the discovery of one sect and their doctrines. After the discovery another one might pop up, and the characters become aware that they haven't even begun to scrape the surface of the dark world surrounding them.

When you create members of the organizations you can find helpful antagonists in the chapter dealing with minions. Zealots, Bogeymen, Atlas and the Spear of Raguel will be explained in detail in that chapter as well.



EVERYDAY LIFE

So what does the world and society in the universe of Noctum look like? Peek out the window and you got the picture. Noctum is based in our modern-day society and most people never see the horrors in hiding. There are some slight differences; the slums are even grittier, poverty and violent crimes are even more noticeable, and disappearances are more frequent. Parts of society are even more downgraded and the social welfare system is on the verge of a total collapse. Dark alleys containing those things society wish to hide and forget are but just one wrong turn away from your favorite pub.

If you live your life like you always have and don't travel the darkest regions of the world and society, chances are that you will live on, blissfully unaware of the truth. But if you walk down the wrong dark alley or peer into the darkened windows of the crumbling house on the edge of your block, something might notice you. In the end, the society of Noctum is very similar to our own.

MENTAL AND HEALTHCARE

Cut downs have turned many hospitals and institutions into holding places for the infirm and mentally ill. The equipment is old and unauthorized reuse of instruments to make ends meet is commonplace, hence the use of dull scalpels isn't unheard of.

The medical profession doesn't have the allure it used to, unless you have the grades and merit to get hired by a private institution where the pay makes it worth the effort, and as a natural consequence there is always a shortage of medical staff in public hospitals. Of course, this is noticeable in the amount of time patients have to wait before receiving treatment, even in the ER.

Many mental institutions (the dark ones sometimes lock up and study those who have seen the truth or display psychic abilities) are used to lock away street people, not really giving them any treatment. They dope them up to calm them down and send them off after a while, preferably on a cold winter day in hopes of ridding themselves of the economic burden. The incurably insane are locked up and forgotten, living out their days in a small cell in a haze of drugs. Others walk the street, killers in the making.

Of course there are good hospitals and institutions as well but these are privately owned and you need a great deal of money to be able to afford them.

As a result of the corruption and downfall that has stricken the public healthcare, shady and decadent individuals do whatever they can to make a buck, no matter who gets hurt. An example of this is a small group of ambulance drivers that goes by the name of "Blue Service". Sexual deviants pay these twisted individuals and in exchange they are allowed to sexually abuse sedated patients in the back of the ambulance before they reach the hospital. They have come up with an even more sick and lucrative way to make money. Patients that have been beaten to the brink of death have on occasions been abused and killed during the act; the scenes have been filmed and sold as snuff to the highest bidder. Of course they conceal all incriminating evidence and footage and report that the patient died before they could reach the hospital as a result of the extensive injuries. Even corrupt cops are involved sometimes, taking a chunk of the payment to look the other way.

SOCIAL WELFARE & CHILD SERVICES

The homelessness is like an epidemic that seems to escalate with each passing day. Several cities have entire blocks that have been abandoned by all, the city and the law included. Here the crazed and homeless live in condemned houses riddled with asbestos. It saves money to give up a small and useless lot rather than actually building shelters and provide food for these people. It is all handled with care and come election time the politicians raise small shelters to win over the voters, only to decommission them later.

Homeless people are at the mercy of cults, sects, serial killers and the creatures that stalk these decrepit and dark realms. Few notice the bloated and mutilated corpses as they rot away beneath the floorboards of crack dens and in the storm drains beneath the crumbling streets above.

Child services are overloaded and it is hard to find foster families for all the lost children. Even if a home is found it is likely that the child will live with several other children

in a cramped space and the parents give them a minimum of everything, in order to cash in the checks provided by the state. Even worse, they may fall victim to gross mistreatment.

The cracks of child services are frequent and wide; children are bound to fall into them. The lucky ones make it to adulthood, fairly unscathed, but most do not. Often they end up turning tricks for dime bags, supplying those of perverse and decadent tastes with a way to indulge in their sickness; some even fall victim to killers. Decadent people working for child services may forge documents that stipulate that a child has been adopted, lost or moved, enabling them to sell the child to the underground sex industries to supplement their meager incomes.

THE LAW

Like many other parts of the public system they have suffered severe cutbacks. They are understaffed, underpaid and unappreciated, and due to this they have lost their motivation. Most cops are honest but their efforts and performance lack passion and quality. Some would work a hobo over with their nightstick rather than spending time reeling him in on a misdemeanor charge, wasting time on dull paperwork.

Homicide detectives rather put their energy on those cases that are fairly simple; cases that are too demanding (if the person wasn't of importance) are put in their files. If they find a strangled prostitute they crack a couple of bade jokes thinking: *"A disgruntled pervert, he'll probably do it again, we'll find him then."*

The police department is under the sway of the political climate. If the mayor tells the chief of police to crack down on drugs, they focus their efforts only on that, shelving most other cases to be investigated and resolved later, even if the trail grows cold.

Some cops are as corrupt as they come, letting the mob bosses and drug dealers get away with just about anything as long as they get to wet their beaks. Organized crime has some cities in a chokehold, controlling much that goes on.

The cells and prisons are filled beyond their capacity and young offenders with little experience are tossed into these places and are either killed, turned into someone's bitch, or taken under the wing of a brutal criminal, emerging as full fledged and mentally damaged violent offenders with a lot of new tricks up their sleeves. As the handling of paperwork is sloppy and disorganized many are lost in the system, spending weeks or months in the holding tank until the matter is cleared up.

THE GOVERNMENT

Overall the government is untouched by darkness. There are many minions stalking the halls of power but both Ahriman and his brothers have learned that it can be far too dangerous to influence and try to control a powerful city official or world leader. The risk of exposure is far too great. During World War Two both Ahriman and his brothers had a hard time controlling things. Today the darkness has eyes and ears in places of power but seldom directly interferes. They seldom need to as human greed and hate do the job for them.

Most governments are oblivious to the hidden world. Some have smaller and clandestine agencies that investigate the unexplainable. However, only few people within the governments have any insight into this. Most of the time governments are busy waging wars over assets and obfuscating their true motives with political hay. Citizens are kept in check by fear, using propaganda and skewed news reports. Democracy is just a word, when a reporter can get fired because his facts make a politico or influential CEO uncomfortable; free speech is dead, or at least taking its last raspy breaths. It is all about monetary resources and those few who actually get into politics with an altruistic agenda soon become corrupted, disillusioned or stomped out by the powers that be.

THE WORLD OF CRIME

As a result of the lapses of society and the overall downward spiral, criminals are given a lot of leeway. Of course they cannot run rampant but they can get away with a lot.

Organized crime is widespread and skirmishes over territory sometimes spill out onto the streets, killing innocents in the crossfire. Drug use, outbursts of sporadic violence and sexual crimes are also common.

Some blocks are under strict control of certain crime lords and they have eyes and ears everywhere. Shop and bar owners are shaken down for protection money, and if the criminals have the cops patrolling the area in their pockets, there isn't much they cannot get away with.

RELIGION

All major religions have fallen from grace; in fact they never even reached it. Since the dawn of the organized church religion has been used to feed the greed of men of power.

It is a business preying on the desperation of those of a weak mind. A religion frees these people from responsibility. What to think, what to do, what to say, all this is given by religion. If something beyond their power happens it is simply the will of God.



There is no God, heaven or hell. Those devoted to religion are either blind believers who would feel lost without it or those who use it to further their own twisted ends. But in some cases religion may help. However, it has more to do with the heart of the faithful than the faith itself.

Many institutions are nothing more than bases of power used to amass monetary resources and to wield political power. Still, many respect the church. This enables some twisted men and women of the cloth to get away with their malice.

SERIAL KILLERS

A serial killer is a menace to society and new ones seem to pop up every day. Some states or cities have a serial killer that has been on the loose for years without being caught.

The media hypes up the murders and the modus operandi, giving the killers catchphrases, turning them to popular sound bites. Several of the killers have almost reached a kind of sub-cultural renown among youth cultures. This feeds their illness and drives them to kill even more. Among some desensitized teens it is actually thought as cool to have attended the same school or lived across the street from a victim, or better yet an actual serial killer.

Some people start webpages and fan sites for these killers, selling t-shirts, alleged pieces of victims' clothing's and similar objects. One of the most popular and still active killers is known as "Pain Poet" due to the messages he leaves at the scenes. One of the killer's most popular sayings (that was left at the body of sixteen-year-old Cindy Moore) was made into a slogan on a t-shirt: "*Red, red rain, I give a penny for your pain*". Pain Poet later killed the maker of the t-shirts, leaving the message: "*When media and greed clashes, I think they deserve a few slashes*." The price of the remaining shirts skyrocketed as they were in the same room as the murder took place. There have been many copycats. The police have a hard time distinguishing which ones of the victims who have been killed by the real killer.

THE COUNTRYSIDE

Even though the big cities provide the dark ones with a lot of hiding places the outskirts, caverns, mines and woods of smaller towns can conceal dreads as well. A claustrophobic ambience hovers thick and stifling over the towns in the countryside. Everyone knows everyone, there isn't much you can do without someone finding out about it. Rumors are constantly circling, as well as stories of the bizarre and urban legends.

Things are often run by a single rich family owning a business, providing jobs to over two thirds of the population, at the same time owning them as they decide their fate. If one of the inhabitants has a secret the whole town has one.

Some towns hide dark truths, shameful truths that are covered up by many of the residents, actually forming a conspiracy. The mayor and sheriff are likely to be loyal to the family running the show, making it hard to find out the truth for any outsiders.

Even though the communities are small, criminal activities are constant. Small dealers oversee larger stocks of drugs for a big dealer in the city; in return they get a small amount to sell locally. Behind locked doors incestuous and depraved relationships go on and most ignore them, not wanting to cause ripples in the pond.

One single dark one may control the entire area, sometimes unknowingly as they are urban legends and ghost stories given life by the believers. In the woods, in the abandoned windmills, bored and unruly kids, fed up with the life of a small town, experiment with rituals from a dusty old book they stole from the local hermit.

Some of these places were once flourishing towns but when the big factory closed many moved away, leaving behind depressed and suicidal out-of-work inhabitants.

This chapter has given an overview of the world of Noctum. Some gamers like to have a feel of familiarity when they play games that geographically coincide with modern day society, and if you are one of them you could use the city you live in as a setting in your game. Others wish to have the game experience more separated from their everyday surroundings, as it might be easier to get in the mood. If that is the case you could use another city or community to set up your stories.

Inspiration surrounds us: how many dark alleys or boarded up houses have we passed in our lives? We seldom give these places much thought, but when looking for inspiration for a horror story one can view them differently. If these places were set in the Noctum universe what mysteries and dreads would they hide? Feel free to come up with your own cults, sects and corporations. Just figure out their motives, history and resources and use them in your setting.

I've seen the witch.

I don't care if Mrs Durawski doesn't believe me. Two days ago it was Johnny who disappeared. He wanted me to go with him to the bathroom but I was too scared. I feel bad now. I'm a coward, but the witch didn't get me.

I hate it here! The beds are filthy and the ones working here are mean and stupid. Mrs Durawski is the worst of the lot. I know we should have better clothes, food and playtimes. I might only be a kid but I can count and I have seen the checks in the office. Durawski is a thief! At first I thought this place was better than the other. Here they don't do things to me. But then the witch came.

I can hear her at night. She lives in the walls. When it's dark she comes for us, sneaks inside our dreams. And we're all so tired. She sucks the life out of us. You just want to sleep, but when you do, and if it's dark, she will come. First, she just drove some of the other kids crazy and they were sent away. Now she takes them. Durawski says that they escaped. She's a liar!

The witch can fly. I've seen it. She is dark and flies over our beds at night. I'm scared. Johnny had also seen the checks and maybe Durawski wants the witch to take us before we tell anyone? Tonight I will try to get out. If I stay I know I will die. I'd rather kill myself than let the witch take me! I think she's scared of the light and that's why I have this flashlight. The sun is setting and it will be bedtime soon. I'm so scared. Please help me!

CHAPTER 13

ARCH GLYPHS & RELICS

Blake & Ames: a crooked law firm by any other name. Those DEA agents we tracked led us to Blake & Ames offices. Employees of this law firm have been under investigation numerous times for jury- and witness-tampering, bribery, fraud and even criminal conspiracy, but they have never been found guilty. And here we were sneaking into one of their offices. It was past closing time when we arrived. Again, Caleb stayed in the car. Silak tried to have me stay behind as well, but I said no way. I grabbed my gear and headed out with him.

Caleb managed to hack into the security systems, looping the camera feed so we got in through the garage. When the guard at the front desk did his rounds we took a peak at the logbook. The DEA agents had signed in and gone to the 30th floor, Blake & Ames' criminal law department. We took the elevator up and didn't really know what to expect. We didn't even know if we'd find anything helpful here.

When the doors opened at the 30th floor I felt that something was wrong. The air was thick, almost tangible in the black, barely-lit marbled corridor. Even when closed these places usually are well-lit. Not taking any chances, Silak drew his gun. Without a word we continued inside, slowly and with quiet steps. It was when we reached the door of the conference room that we heard the chanting and the moans. The door stood ajar and a flickering light escaped the crack. I looked inside, feeling my stomach turn.

The four agents, accompanied by two other men, stood around the conference table. Pinned to it with thin wires that cut into his skin was a naked man. One of the female agents had opened him up and slowly removed his entrails while chanting, placing them in jars. And the man was still alive. They chanted louder, working their way up to a frenzy. The air began to vibrate and became heavy with the tinge of sulfur. It seemed they reached a climax, the chants becoming screams of inhuman intensity. One of the men placed a small box on the chest of the mutilated man. Seconds later the woman cut the bound man's throat. He convulsed as the life drained from his body, the blood staining the box. I could barely stifle my own scream and almost vomited. The small group bowed to the body and withdrew, leaving through a back office door. Silak went inside, I stayed outside, frozen in place, my sanity leached from me.

Silak reached out and picked up the blood stained box. He opened it and if I didn't know better I could swear I saw him smile.

Then, in a calm voice, he said: "I think I know what they are after..."

In the millennia that have passed several artifacts and relics have been brought into existence. Some of them are capable of binding powerful creatures while others may open gateways to the Coil. No one knows where these powers come from but they enable humans to perform magic unnatural to them and it seems that some humans are possessed by an unknown force which allows them to create these rituals and relics. Dark energies and the very body, soul and mind of the user fuel arch-glyphic magic. Rituals constructed by humans are generally much more complex in their workings and the one performing them has to be magically gifted and believe in the magic. Arch glyphs are dangerous, not only because they are powerful but also because anyone can use them; they don't even have to believe. It is like flipping a switch.

ARCH GLYPHS

Arch-glyphic is a language of its own. It is a mix of several human languages and can sound different from time to time. Basically, it is hid inside many human languages and the exact pronunciation and combination of words in conjunction with sacrifices and other criteria activate the dark energies woven into the odd symbols. The term "arch glyphs" is a human invention, created long ago by the dark priests of old. It is unknown if the name is intended to mean arch (as in superior, archangel, archbishop) or if it describes the often curved and peculiar forms (as in "arched") of the symbols. This will probably never be known.

Only those possessing a human soul (Defiled and all humans) are able to use the rituals and relics. Dark ones try to control humans in order to get them to use these powers to their advantage. Sometimes they have killed humans in possession of these powers outright if they failed to control them.

Arch-glyphic relics come in all shapes and sizes. Some are small puzzles that fit in the palm of one's hand while others can be actual buildings infused with powers. Many of the relics are protected by ciphers, codes and riddles to stop people from using them, and it can take quite a while to unlock their secrets in some cases. Also, many languages are combined in many of the glyphs and translating these properly is a hard task indeed.

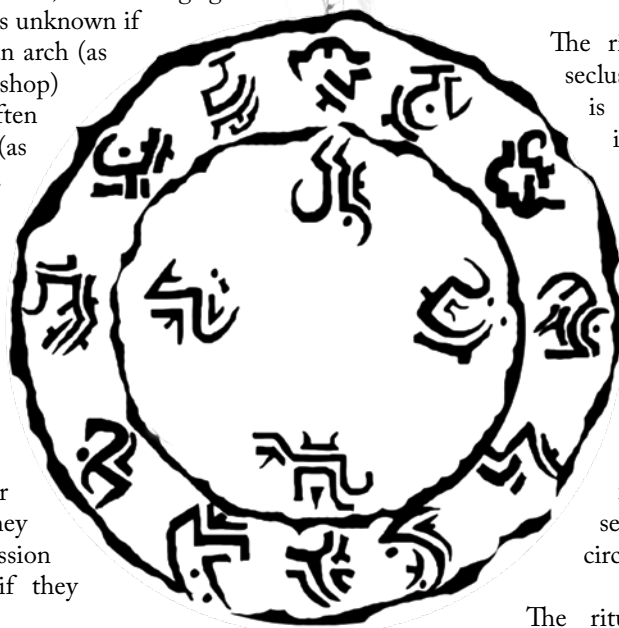
Incantations spoken correctly can be very powerful, even playing them back from an audio device may generate an effect under certain conditions. Many of these objects and incantations have been naturally woven into the fabric of human history and myth as a result.

The myth and laws of the rituals and artifacts bind some creatures summoned and therefore they may take on an appearance and demeanor unfamiliar to them. Some entities may very well be unbound, or those believing themselves demons, but even creatures that know their true origins are forced to obey the laws of the arch glyphs, making them appear as creatures of myth as they are summoned forth.

DEATH SEALS

These powerful symbols are capable of opening gateways to the Coil. There are sixteen specific realms (not including Shadow Paths) in the Coil, each seal corresponds to one of them.

Most realms exist in multiples, which would make it hard to use any one single seal. But the arch glyphs are capable of identifying the specific version of the realm the person using the seals is searching for. For example, if one would need to enter a particular Nether of Nightmares the ritual provided by the seal would link to that specific realm, making it possible to find the way. In cases when the practitioner travels arbitrarily, the seal will open a gate to any types of version of a realm.



The ritual has to be performed in seclusion and a human sacrifice is required. Beyond that, the individual needs to ingest the flesh of the victim in a precise manner indicated by the ritual. Each seal entails the mutilation of the sacrifice and the organs and limbs have to be placed in manner required by the ritual. Using chalk and the blood of the sacrifice an invocation circle two meters in diameter has to be drawn on the floor. The symbols of the sixteen seals are also drawn alongside the circle lines.

The ritual chanting, mutilation and eating of the sacrifice takes two hours, after this everything inside the circle is transported to the Coil. Upon arrival the circle becomes a burning glowing mark. It is still unknown for how long the portal remains open but when the person who activated it steps inside and wishes to go back, he is immediately transported back to his original location, as are those presently inside the circle. Needless to say, if the portal closes before the person is able to get back he will be stuck in the Coil and have to find his own way back to our world. None of the seals can be used to open a gateway to our world from the Coil.

It is possible to engage in self-mutilation instead of using a victim. In this case a finger, toe, half the tongue or one eye

is needed. During the ritual the person mutilates himself, then he has to tap roughly five deciliters of blood from his body. While eating his own body part he drinks the blood. This as well will fuel the ritual. Self-mutilation and sacrifices are often needed when dealing with arch-glyphic magic since it is necessary to generate small amounts of dark energies to use them, drawing ambient energy into ones own soul.

Besides this, the ritual drains twenty essence points and 2D psyche points. The actions taken may also cause loss of psyche points and induce mental disorders.

Page fragments of obscure books containing these rituals circulate in the darker regions of the occult community.

RELICS & ARTIFACTS

Arch glyphs have given rise to a wide range of different artifacts. Some are buried, others are hidden in the Coil. Certain artifacts and relics can be found in museums, thought of as nothing more than historical items. On some rare occasions a relic that has similar capabilities of arch-glyphic ones has been the result of pure human misery.

GATEWAY OF APSU

Apsu is the name of the ancient Sumerian good of water, a horrible being made from water. The artifact was made by insane priests millennia ago. It stands two meters high and is approximately one meter across. It looks like a lumbering doorway carved from a strange black stony material. Archaic Sumerian and arch glyphs cover every surface.

The text is extremely advanced and it has a magnitude of 6 x 3. The text in itself is written in puzzles and anagrams that need to be solved as well but cryptography is needed. Deciphering it also has a magnitude of 6 x3.

If translated correctly, and deciphered, the text divulges how to use the portal. It is said to lead into the realm of Apsu, bestowing the magician with vast knowledge. The ancients need the blood and flesh of a young child to be appeased. It is the innocence the ancients are said to feed upon. The child is to be placed in front of the portal while the invoker chants the passages inscribed on the upper arch of the portal. After this the wrists of the child are cut.

When the ritual is performed the blood trickles towards the portal, becoming absorbed by the dark stone. After this the void of the portal is filled with a rippling black and oily-looking substance. This only lasts for a few minutes.

If the person steps inside he will be hurled through unknown regions of the Coil, a dark and unexplainable voyage indeed. Upon returning some hours later the individual is covered in blackish ooze, heavy with the smell of putridity. The ritual drains 1D+1 psyche points

and 10 points of essence and takes one hour to complete (excluding the time spent in the Coil). One who has performed this ritual is capable of traveling to a random glyphic temple. This drains 1D psyche points and the storyteller has to deem how many psyche points might be required beyond this since the travel and the realm itself might have an advert effect on the persons mind. This ability lasts for three days and three nights.

TALISMAN OF TRUTH

An occultist of the dark arts created this neck chain in 1730 in Gothenburg. His name was Harald Mattsson and he crafted the talisman in his alchemic laboratory.

Upon its dark surface it has the sixteen symbols of the death seals engraved and a red ruby is placed in the middle. On the back a text in Latin has been engraved. This is an instruction on how to use the relic. It has to be worn and some blood from the user has to be smeared over it in order to activate it. According to the text, one has to “go outside the everyday shroud of thought”. In game terms the character needs to cut himself and offer up some blood (1 fatal hit point worth) after which he has to pass a Cool roll with a -2 modifier. If he is successful, 8 essence points and 1D/2 psyche point is depleted. As long as he wears the talisman around his neck he is able to see Coil distortions and gateways. They appear as rippling heat waves and if he gets close to them he might hear chilling sounds from beyond. This ability lasts for twenty-four hours. Sometimes, totally sporadically, the talisman may transport the user to a realm in the Coil. It is also rumored that a demon may reside inside it, possessing those who touch it directly.

SKULL OF OMAKI

Omaki was a slave during the 18th century. He was also well versed in the religion of Voodoo and the dark side of Hoodoo magic. He made the relic using the skull of one of his masters after he killed him. It is covered in Vevés and colored dark red.

To activate the relic a particular spell is needed. Only through arduous research (Extensive scope, Demanding complexity) into the occult can one find the spell.

The words have to be spoken in a mix of Yoruba and French: “Those who walk in front of me covered by eternal mist, let them be seen. Those who hide in plain sight, let them come forward and those who lie to the world itself, let them be known.”

After this, 1D/2 psyche points and 1D essence points are drained. As long as the one using the skull is holding it he is capable of seeing the true forms of creatures.

Larger creatures in human form appear as foggy transparent and eerie shapes surrounding the human form; other creatures show their evil natures and may appear as

burnt corpses and any other thing that represent their vile natures. Creatures in incorporeal form (Oculs, demons and spirits without a host) appear as thick dark mists, showing dreadful features from time to time. This ability holds until the character lets go of the skull or falls asleep (or meditates).

MONOLITH OF SETAU

This massive relic was built in ancient Egypt. When erected it measures five meters in height and is approximately one and a half meter across at the base. It is made of hardened black obsidian and weighs several tons. Every surface is engraved with old Coptic that speaks of its power and how to use it. The text is very advanced, vast and also encrypted. To translate and decipher it should be regarded as a project. The translation has a magnitude of 6 and is done in 7 instances. Scanners and a computer system with the proper software are needed to be able to decipher it correctly. If by chance, one of the scribes made some sort of decoding key in the ancient days, a single individual might be able to untangle the ancient texts without the aid of a computer. The deciphering also has a magnitude of 6 and is done in 7 instances.

The texts tell of a ritual that will summon Ammut, the demoness of punishments and eater of hearts. She will be put under the control of the invoker and will perform any one task she is capable of performing. The ritual is complicated and can only be performed in the darkest hour of the night. The monolith has to be placed in at least one-meter depth of water in the sea (preferably at a beach or in a bay). The throats of twenty untouched women have to be cut, the blood spilled in the water at the base of the monolith. The chanting, sacrifices and the complete ritual take four hours to complete and at its completion it costs 30 points of essence and 1D+7 psyche points. From the shallow waters the gigantic shape of Ammut comes forth. The invoker may ask one favor and the demoness will do everything in her power to complete the task given.

In reality it is the Vaakal Rialoth that is summoned, bound to obey the arch glyphs. He will do all in his power to oblige the invoker but after he is done and he is no longer trapped, he will surely try and exert his revenge. Being controlled by a futile human isn't something a Vaakal takes lightly.

The monolith is lost and both Ahriman and the Harbingers search for it. Ahriman intently wants to have it

to be able to control Rialoth through human minions. The Harbingers want it to prevent the very same thing.

THE COLLECTION OF LIBORIO DE LUCA

In 1889 a man named Liborio De Luca lived out his pitiful and harrowing existence in Rome. He was a tortured young artist addicted to opium and suffering from syphilis. As his mind caved more and more to the debilitating diseases he began to experience night terrors and even suffered from dreadful daytime hallucinations.

What he didn't know was that his dark passions and inner torment had given rise to a Nether of Nightmares.

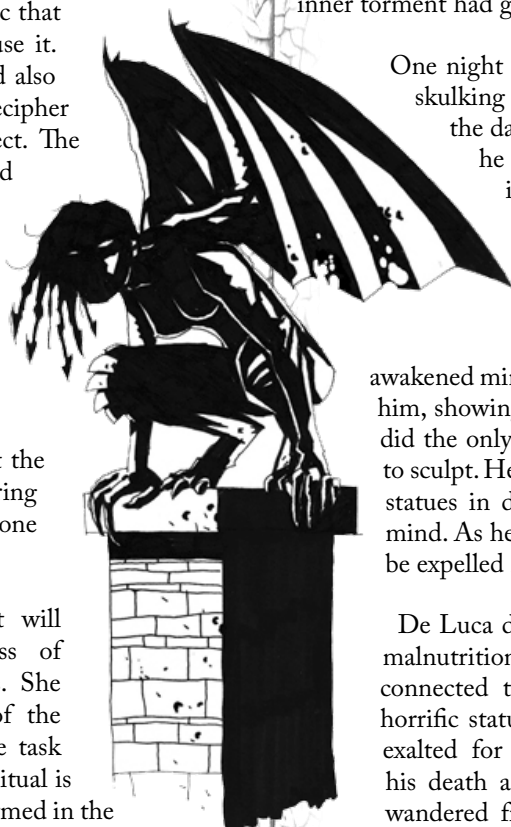
One night he dreamt and as he awoke he saw a skulking creature glaring at him, huddled in the darkened corner of his room. In a panic, he killed it and watched as it dissolved into a puddle of sludge. De Luca had seen this thing before, in his dreams.

He feared sleep, as he was afraid that more of these things would cross over to the world of the awakened mind. But still his hallucinations haunted him, showing him creatures from his dreams. He did the only thing he knew how to, and that was to sculpt. He sat one week straight, sculpting small statues in dark clay, depicting the things in his mind. As he finished each, the creature seemed to be expelled from his visions.

De Luca died slumped over his worktable from malnutrition, sleep deprivation and complications connected to his illness, but he had made six horrific statues. De Luca (as often happens) was exalted for his genius and brilliant work after his death and the statues were sold. They have wandered from owner to owner, leaving a trail of blood. Every owner who has possessed them has died or disappeared under bizarre circumstances. Three are now owned by the historical museum of Tearfall City, the others are lost, nowhere to be found.

The statues are prisons, containing the creatures from his dreams. They can only be roused from their slumber if they are kept in close proximity of a sleeping human being. Gently, they influence the dreams of the one sleeping. Every night the dreams become more and more like the ones of De Luca. His Nether of Nightmares was a barren landscape sculpted of clay under a dark sky. In hollows atrocious creatures lived, stalking him. The Nether was destroyed since De Luca died but the creatures entombed within the clay wish to recreate it, using the minds of others.

Every night (if kept within twenty meters of a sleeping human) a statue steals two psyche points. When it has generated ten it is capable of breaking free, assuming its full size.



They usually kill the owner and flee, trying to find their counterparts. Only when they are joined and awake can they recreate their realm. Every day they are free to roam they deplete one of the points they stole, when they run out they shrink, becoming petrified again. However, they are capable of becoming petrified at will, conserving points, stalking the streets in search for their comrades, returning to feed and to uphold the illusion.

The statues are about thirty centimeters in height when in a petrified state, when they rouse they grow, quadrupling in height. They look like perverted gargoyles with withered wings, sharp talons and spike-like teeth. Use the stats for Wossals when using these creatures as NPCs with the difference that they are capable of climbing on walls and ceilings.

Many experience an eerie feeling when looking straight into the eyes of the statues but still they instill a feel of bizarre fascination. One would find it almost impossible to smash these vile pieces of art, as they are unnaturally hardy.

DAGGERS OF DOMBALIK

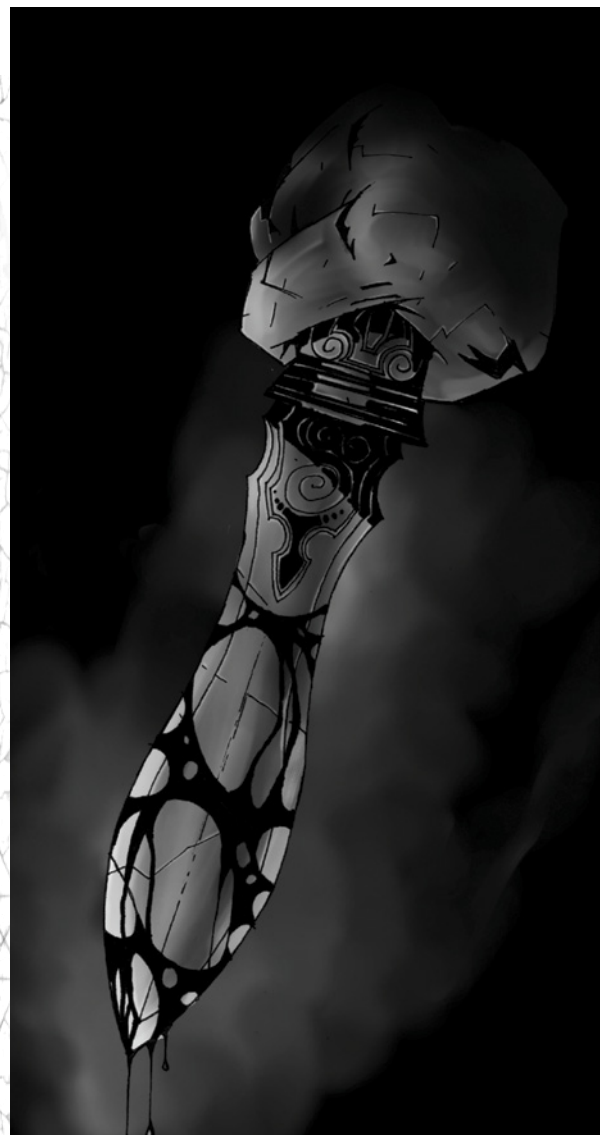
Dombalik was an obscure alchemist who lived in the 12th century in Russia. Aided by the visions sent to him by a glyphic temple he forged nine daggers that could “disband the shadows”. These are capable of damaging dark ones and they ignore any kind of natural armor and damage reduction. When a dark one is stabbed the daggers immediately cause 10 points worth of damage. These hit points may only be healed at a rate of 1 per day, no matter what. Also it causes the creatures a lot of pain and at times it can weaken them if left inside, making the creature incapable of moving with any speed, pulling it out or using its powers (full bloods can move and remove it though). But using the daggers comes with a price.

The user loses 1 fatal hit point, 1D essence and 2 psyche points for every attack that hits a dark one. Incorporeal creatures can take between two and six stabs before they are destroyed. If used against humans they cause the same amount of damage as a normal dagger. Until this day, no one knows where the daggers are but they are rumored to circle amongst the most obscure dealers.

ACERBUS VERITAS

“The Dark Truth” is the name given a collection of books. A monk named Adan Blyth wrote them in England in 1132. He worked as a translator, translating Greek texts into Latin. He spent nights and days in the library of the monastery, illuminating ancient documents.

His mission was to screen the different texts and decide which were to be destroyed and which would survive. During his life he had read many strange and blasphemous works. One night he found a particularly disturbing document, involving pagan rituals and the sacrificing



of animals. As he read his mind wandered, and he felt more and more compelled to continue to read it. He was oblivious to the fact that the essence of a Golnagoth was contained within the pages.

The powerful demigod of old soon poisoned his mind, possessing him. The foul creature used Blyth to write about the worship of old; it forced him to take his refuge in the countryside where he could continue his work. For years he worked; each page strengthened the creature and those of its kind. They were slumbering in the dark regions of the Coil and began to stir.

Soon, his feverish fantasies and the horrid stories of the Golnagoth were woven into reality by the power of the glyphs.

For seven long years he wrote, and even started to practice rituals. Dark things began to stir in the surrounding woods and people started to talk about and fear that which stalked the night. Soon they all pointed the finger at the hermit who had been hiding in the outskirts of their village for a long time. Every night they could see the light of his candles.



One night, in an attempt to summon one of the despicable creatures from beyond, he got his hands on a young boy, wishing to sacrifice him. Shortly after he went missing the villagers began to search and soon they headed for the old windmill where the hermit lived. They heard the chanting from within but none came to open when they pounded on the door, so they broke it down.

They found Blyth in a frantic rant, holding a knife over the bound child ready to strike. The men intervened, saving the boy. In their rage they wrapped a rope around Blyth's neck, hanging him from the beams as he was still chanting. Before the rope snapped his neck he laughed, knowing the truth. During the seven years he had spent in seclusion he had written seven thick volumes, each called *Acerbus Veritas*. As with his master, Blyth's very essence had been bound to the books; as he died his spirit lingered, captured within the pages. Days before, he had buried them deep in the forest in an iron box.

It wasn't until 1789 that the box was recovered during an archaeological dig. The books were unearthed but stolen by parties unknown only a week later. Until this day, only two have showed up. A private collector named Harry Whistler, who lives in London, owns one of them. The other is in the hands of the Smithsonian.

The books contain the spirit of Adan Blyth, but only if they are brought together can he fully possess someone. Besides this, each book contains an array of arch-glyphic rituals. Some are less powerful while others are very powerful. Each book contains between ten and fifteen rituals. Every ritual has to be performed after sundown. Each ritual

demands a different invocation circle, which has to be drawn in the urine or blood of the one conducting the ritual, and also has to be outlined with chalk. None of the rituals can be done multiple times to enhance their effect. The language is Latin and Greek and has a magnitude of 4 per page to translate. Some passages may be written in anagrams and riddles. Usually they have a magnitude of 5 to decipher. Use the examples below to get an idea of what kind of rituals the books may entail.

VOTUM UMBRA

The ritual takes about an hour to complete and requires the sacrifice of a dog to represent the dark hunter. The blood is to be spilt in a copper chalice as one is reciting the passages calling forth the shadows. This is a ritual of vengeance and a personal object belonging to the victim is required. This ritual drains 1D/2 psyche points and 1D essence points. At its completion a Wossal is summoned. Only the voice of the creature can be heard as it lingers in the Coil. The invoker then speaks the name of his enemy and the creature sets off to kill. It tries until it succeeds or gets killed itself.

CUPIDITAS SPATIUM

The invoker chants and prays to the dark gods in order to shed some of his corporeal form. To symbolize the shedding of the physical form a mammal (of any kind) has to be skinned while still living. The skin is then hammered down on the floor by a silver spike and the remaining animal is burned. This costs the invoker 1D/2 psyche points and 1D/2 essence points. It is now possible to pass through solid objects. The user of this power has to concentrate and then pass through. Every time a surface is being walked through it costs 1 fatal hit point. For every half meter that is passed through (if walking through a thick object) beyond the first, another hit point has to be spent. The power lasts for twelve hours and the ritual takes one hour to conduct.

INVISUS IUREIRO

This is a ritual performed only by the most desperate and scornful in their final moments. To even be able to perform this ritual successfully the invoker has to have a stressed or lower mentality. The ritual takes about thirty seconds to conduct and involves a chant which entails an oath of hate and scorn of all those living. After that the invoker uses a knife, slitting his own throat. As his body dies, his spirit will be bound to the place (a wooded area, a house etc.). He will become a spirit with an Anima equal to his essence (keeping his other mental stats). He is lost, forever haunting the site until expelled, exacting his hateful revenge. The storyteller decides the exact powers he will have. If a character were to perform this ritual he will become one with the darkness and the player should make a new character.

ATROX INSANIA

By performing a maddening dance and a chant within the circle, the invoker may summon the inner madness of another human being. He needs only to have seen the human and know his approximate whereabouts and name. This ritual requires a powder made from dried human brain matter. To get it might be quite difficult.

During the ritual the invoker takes a mouthful of the substance, blowing it in every direction. The ritual costs 1D psyche points and may result in a couple of minutes of hysteria in the invoker but the victim is worse off. After every sundown the victim suffers a combination of hysteria and hallucinations. These are a bit milder than their natural counterparts but it is very hard to act normally, and in a controlled manner. At sunup the effect disappears. This will last for 1D+1 days. If the victim is in a place with no real darkness at night (as in a region with the northern lights) the effect will last from ten o'clock in the evening to five in the morning.

ADVOCO PRODIGIUM CAELESTIS

This ritual requires at least eight fellow helpers. The invoker needs to forge a special crown of copper and a dagger of silver. Also, a stone table and four pillars (approximately three meters in height) have to be erected. Several symbols of arcane knowledge have to be etched upon them. It is also necessary to conduct the ritual outdoors, preferably in a wooded area or by a large body of water.

This powerful ritual needs a human sacrifice; the blood has to be spilled over the stone table. The helpers have to chant during the entire ritual and it takes three hours to conduct. After its completion a powerful and harrowing god of the void emerges, either from the water or from the ground behind the altar. The dark god may be asked to grant a favor within its power, such as to bring riches, slay enemies or divulge ancient arcane knowledge. In reality a Golnagoth has been summoned, bound by the ritual. The invoker loses 1D+1 psyche points and 30 points worth of essence.

FYI

It isn't very hard to invent more relics and arch-glyphic rituals. Just think of what you like to have in your stories and come up with some traits for the objects and rituals. Arch-glyphic magic should never be taken lightly as it requires no real skill or prior magical knowledge to produce a powerful effect. Always try to balance cost of essence, psyche points and sacrifices according to the powers of them.

"Relics" don't have to be ancient things. There are ways to include everyday objects into the mythology. A walkie-talkie that can pick up transmissions from the Coil can be quite disturbing. Screams of trapped souls start to penetrate the static every time a dark one approaches or when a distortion is nearby. Useful tool to have around but it will definitely unhinge the characters somewhat. Why does the device have this ability? Well, whatever the reasons they are probably enough to weave an entire story.

When characters read ancient tomes, diaries and other things of a similar nature the storyteller can use some methods to make it more interesting other than just telling the players what it says. Handouts are always a hit, especially if they are done to elevate the mood. The second method is called role-play in the role-play. More on this in the Storyteller & Experience Chapter.

CHAPTER 14

AFFLICTIONS

My head hurt and I felt ill by just looking at that damn box. We sat in the car, myself in the passenger seat, Caleb in the back while Silak drove. Silak was talking but I couldn't really hear him. It was like I tuned his voice out. "Talisman of Truth", "gateways", "blood sacrifice" were some of the things I heard. Other than that his words ran together in my mind. It felt like they drowned out my thoughts. And soon thereafter the whispers entered my head.

I couldn't understand their words, but I knew they wanted me. To soothe me and keep me safe. And I was so tired. If I slept, they would make everything better. I closed my eyes and just as I was fading away, Silak yelled "Don't touch it!" This snapped me out of it and I looked back and saw Caleb. He had taken an amulet out of the box. His eyes were black as coal and I saw his fingernails peel off, replaced by talons. He lunged at us.

Silak lost control of the car as clawed hands ripped into his shoulders. I remember the vehicle skidding on its side over the rain-soaked road. After that I only remember waking up in the upended car. Silak dragged me out of the vehicle. Dizzy and aching all over I got to my feet and heard the sound of grinding metal. As the backdoor burst off its hinges, Silak yanked my arm and told me to run. Just before I turned I saw Caleb, or what used to be him. He wasn't there anymore. Something had taken him and changed him into a monster looking to kill us. My friend was gone...



This chapter will explain how physical and psychological possession works, and how a human starts down the road of darkness. Human evil can become a force of its own, with a will and personality. These concepts are important to any good horror story and tend to spice things up.

STAINS OF EVIL

Evil that is strong and concentrated enough may give rise to a phenomenon known as the Staining. When the evil is merged with dark energies it gains a form of sentience and accumulates at a spot. These places have always been subjected to horrors of some kind, multiple times.

There are two stats that describe these places: Stain points and Threshold. The actual Stain points are the raw power of the stain and symbolize the reach of the evil. The Threshold shows how easy it may come to life and affect others.

THE PERILS OF STAINS

Not only places but also people can carry stains of evil. There are different ways of becoming stained. An individual may be “infected” by another person or become infused with dark energies as a result of being close to minions of the dark ones too often. Also, heinous acts may generate stains of evil in a person. A few violent rapes or murders isn't enough for this to happen, the person would have to indulge in these kind of acts for an extended period of time of his own free will. A Worried mentality or lower, in conjunction with gruesome acts, may generate a permanent stain of evil in a person. Stains have a threshold value ranging from 1-10, and an amount of stain points ranging from 10-49. The stain points describe the “density” of evil.

By using the threshold value as a rank the stain may activate a person's weakness if the individual is within its area, or if he carries a part of the stain. The storyteller makes a contested test, pitting the threshold value against the Cool of the afflicted.

Stains can never make a person do anything radical but can instill different moods and characteristics. Exactly what these changes may entail depends on the origin of the stain. Stains usually originate from acts performed by other people, and some of the characteristics from the person or

persons involved in its creation can be passed on to those afflicted by it. Suddenly, a person that is a right-hander and non-smoker may use his left hand a bit more and feel the urge to light up a cigarette if the person responsible for creating the stain had those characteristics. Nightmares connected to the place may stalk the character and he may also have some skills that he normally won't have.

If a person suffers from psychosis or schizophrenia the story is entirely different. In these cases the stain may force the person to do its bidding. If the stain succeeds in a contested test against its victim it will be able to control the individual for thirty minutes per success.

TETHERS & LIMITS

Stains of evil are bound to a specific place or person. It often searches for new ways to express itself, or tries to gain a physical form. As it is often locked inside a person or a place it tries to reach others in the hopes of accumulating more stains.

If a person enters a place and if the stain so wishes it can try to ride along with the person. To enter an individual it has to succeed in a contested test; the value of its threshold is pitted against the victim's Cool. If it is successful it can extend a part of itself, staining the individual. It then has to transfer an amount of stain points equal to the Cool $\times 2$ of the person. It is possible for a stain to store a total amount in an individual equal to the person's Cool multiplied by four. Wherever the person goes, the stain has eyes and ears. At least one point of stain has to be left at (or with the person acting as source of the stain) the place where it is tethered. One stain point is reduced from the “infected” person every twenty-four hours. Each point travels back to its place of origin. It is possible for the stain to jump from one person to another, if the afflicted bumps into anyone; the stain may try to jump into that person. If it succeeds in the contested test and has the appropriate amount of stain points it may transfer itself. Any points exceeding $4 \times \text{Cool}$ of the victim are automatically expelled and travel back to their origin.

The phenomenon uses this method in hopes of finding more power. It searches for other places and persons that carry stains. If it comes across such a place or person, the most powerful



of the sites will try to store stain points in individuals, hopefully carrying it back, strengthening it as a whole. This permanently depletes stain points from the other site, strengthening the stronger one permanently. Stains from other sites have to be carried back in this way, and cannot be transferred (as surplus stain points may be, traveling back to their point of origin).

A stain of evil has an intellect and can understand and comprehend its surroundings to some extent. If it cannot get its hands on an insane individual that it may control to carry the energies back and forth, it will try doing so by body jumping. It may jump into one person getting in a cab going in the right direction, jumps to another that hops on the bus and so forth, trying to find its way back home with its added power. Whenever a place has accumulated fifty points' worth of stain one of four things may happen: A gateway to the Coil is created, a Coil distortion will linger in the area, the place becomes cursed or a creature of darkness, usually some form of unbound half-breed, will emerge. If a person (who is an anchor for the stain to begin with) accumulates fifty points in total he will most likely die, destroying the stain in the process, or he may become a half-breed (such as a Wossal) or one of the Defiled. When people die of this it is mostly due to aneurysms and heart attacks, the harrowing visions are too much to handle and the body will respond in a psychosomatic way.

Ridding a place of stains may be done in several ways, depending on the nature of the phenomenon. Some may have buried victims that need to be unearthed; others may prove sensitive to exorcisms or cleansing rituals of some sort. You have to keep in mind that places and people afflicted with stains of evil are very unusual, and that accumulation of stain points is an arduous task. Many may feel an eerie presence when in close proximity to these places, not really knowing why. Only when the right circumstances arise (acts perfectly matched by a distortion in close proximity, or similar occurrence) a stain can come into existence.

Example: *Donovan walks into an old apartment searching for leads pertaining to his case. The player has no clue that the place is stained. It has a threshold of 6 and 20 stain points. In the seventies a serial killer named Daniel Sorenson used the apartment to kill and mutilate eighteen young men. His evil still lingers.*

The storyteller describes how Donovan feels watched and even thinks he might hear faint whispers from time to time. As the character keeps looking through the apartment (a bit on edge) the storyteller rolls a contested test, pitting the stain's threshold of 6 against Donovan's Cool of 3. The storyteller rolls 6 dice for the stain and scores 2 successes. He then rolls for Donovan, and only scores one success. The stain is victorious. Donovan has a Cool of 3, which means that the stain has to transfer a minimum of 6 stain points, and can transfer a maximum of 12. The storyteller decides that the stain will use 7 points, leaving 13 at the scene. This will give it a week with Donovan if it wishes as one point is depleted every twenty-four hours. The player looks suspiciously at the storyteller when he has rolled

the dice and describes how a gust of cold wind flows over him, making him shiver to his bones for a short while. Donovan now carries with him 7 points of stain.

Example: *A couple of hours later, Donovan passes a seedy bar. He has the weakness Drunk and the stain wish to enter the bar in hopes of finding an unsavory character that might carry even more stain. Once again the storyteller makes a contested test, pitting the threshold of 6 against Donovan's Cool of 3. The roll comes up in favor of the stain, and with that the stain activates Donovan's weakness Drunk.*

The storyteller tells the player that the character has a sudden crave for alcohol and needs it bad. With that he enters the bar. As he enters and sits down the storyteller describes how he orders a glass of red wine and asks the bartender for a "loosie". The player looks strangely at the storyteller, knowing that Donovan hates red wine and is a non-smoker. The player has no idea that his character carries a part of a serial killer from the seventies who loved red wine and was a chain smoker. Even stranger things will start to happen, as other quirks of Mr. Daniel Sorenson will become more apparent.

PHYSICAL POSSESSION

They may be a type of ghost, demon, raw power or whatever really, but for the sake of simplicity we are going to call them spirits. Spirits are beings that don't have a physical form (some do but only in the Coil). If they wish to affect the physical reality they need a host.

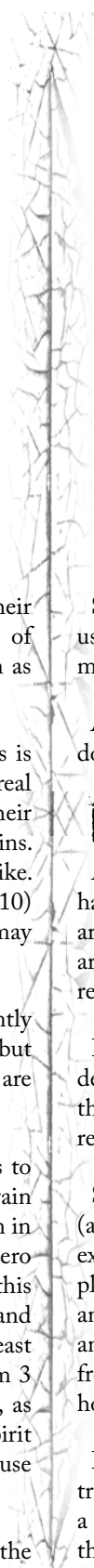
Few spirits float free; most are usually bound to an object or place. Powerful incorporeal beings (Oculs) have the power to affect their surrounding without a host but spirits aren't capable of doing this.

As with people every spirit is different. Sure, all of them are the result of dark energies but their behavior and motivations may vary greatly. When the storyteller sets off to create a spirit to use in his setting he needs to figure out a few things. First of all he needs to have an idea of where the spirit resides and why it exists. When it gets its hands on a body, what does it do? Is it a combination of dark energies and a soul, which needs some kind of closure? Is it an entity believing it is of demonic descent and only wishing to wreak havoc upon the world? How do you stop it and how powerful is it?

TRAITS OF THE SPIRITS

They lack a physical form but still have a mind and a force of will. When creating spirits the following traits are used to describe them. These traits are rolled as is and are not doubled like pure Aptitude rolls.

Resolve: Spirits have Resolve, which represents their strength of will. This represents its will and determines how hard it is to exorcise if possible. They have a value ranging from 2 to 10 depending on how powerful they are.



Anima: Anima is the stuff of spirits; it represents their toughness and also fuels their abilities. The weakest of spirits only have 10 points while others have as much as 120.

Intelligence: Spirits think but their thought process is somewhat skewed when they only possess an incorporeal form. They may be smart and somewhat logical but their thinking is crude. And this trait represents their Brains. When they obtain a host they think more humanlike. Most have an Intelligence score ranging between (3-10) but some older ones that have learned a great deal may have more.

Acuity: They experience the world somewhat differently as their senses are very separate from physical ones, but their score in this attribute shows how observant they are and range from 3-10.

Drain: When entering a physical host the spirit has to use energy in order to stay anchored to the host. Drain shows how much essence it drains from its victim when in possession of his body. After it has drained a victim to zero essence it begins to feed from its own energy. When this is reduced to zero the spirit is expelled from the body and unable to possess another until it has regenerated at least half its Anima. Spirits have a drain value ranging from 3 to 8. More powerful spirits have a higher drain rate, as they require more power to stay in a physical form. A spirit drains energy every six hours from its victim. It may use the host's essence to fuel its powers as well.

Alteration: Many spirits have the ability to alter the host's body in order to represent their own abilities and personalities. The alteration a spirit is capable of is stated under this attribute.

Skills: Well, these are the skills a spirit may have and can use when it enters a host. Of course, only theoretical skills may be used when it is in incorporeal form.

Abilities: These are abilities that spirits may possess that don't involve an alteration of the host's body.

BECOMING POSSESSED

As these entities are bound to a place or object the person has to enter the place or handle the object. Some spirits are powerful enough to possess someone as they enter an area or handle an object, while others need more time, requiring an extended time of proximity to the host.

How someone possessed views the world varies depending on the spirit. Some feel as if they are trapped in their body, helpless to do anything about it. Others don't remember a thing.

Spirits aren't known to jump from one host to another (as stains of evil are capable of doing) and when they are expelled or wish to leave the host they travel back to the place of their imprisonment. Some incredibly powerful and ancient spiritual entities *are* capable of body jumping and others have no place that binds them, leaving them free to possess anyone they come across. These entities, however, are very unusual.

If spirits are expelled due to the depletion of Anima they travel back to their imprisonment. However, they have a link to their host and as soon as they have recharged themselves to half their Anima they may travel back automatically to the host. If they possess another that is in close proximity to their place as they rest the link to the previous host is severed. If spirits are expelled due to an exorcism they cannot travel back to their host.

When possessing, the spirit uses its Resolve in a contested test, pitting it against the Cool of the host. Each attempt (if unsuccessful) drains the spirit of an amount of Anima equal to the Cool x 2 of the host. If it is successful it enters the host. When resting outside a host a spirit regenerates one point of Anima each half hour.

ABILITIES OF SPIRITS

Here are some abilities that are common to many of these entities. Few have all, but they often possess one or two. To be able to use these abilities a spirit needs to be in the possession of a host.

Soul feeding: If successful in a grapple the spirit may feed upon the essence of a human to replenish itself. Each round the spirit may drain 1D essence points from the individual. A victim in the grip of a soul feeding has to successfully beat the spirit in a contested test using his Cool against the spirit's Resolve, before this he is helpless.

Psychic Abilities: These work exactly as those humans may have. Some spirits have one or two of these they may use to further their ends. It is still unclear why spirits have this ability.

Thoughts: Certain entities may access the memories (and if slumbering) the thoughts of the victim. This proves helpful when they wish to take over someone's life.

Swarm: With this disturbing power the spirit may summon all insects within a two hundred meter radius. Small swarms can rarely hurt an individual but they obstruct the line of sight and the experience often causes panic. This costs the spirit 5 points of Anima per thirty seconds of control. Larger swarms cause 2 point of deadly damage on those present every thirty seconds (and might cause poisoning depending on the insects), and the cost is 10 Anima points per thirty seconds of control. How big the swarms may get depends on the amount of insects in the area. The swarm can be directed as the spirit wishes.

Rage/Fear: If a victim is within one hundred meters and in the line of sight of the spirit, it may cause uncontrollable rage or fear. If the spirit spends 12 points of Anima and successfully beats the victim in a contested test, pitting its Resolve against the victim's Cool, the individual is automatically pumped up to the third stage of fight or flight. This lasts for approximately one minute. The spirit chooses if the victim reacts with fight or flight. If the reaction is fight the affected person attacks everyone around them (even friends). If the reaction is flight the victim flees uncontrollably.

Slumber: The spirit is capable of putting itself in a state of slumber in the host. When they do this they cannot use any of their powers but they don't drain any Anima. They are mostly unaware of their surroundings but if they try to perceive the world around them they have to pass an Attention test with a modifier of -3. If successful they

can see and hear through the eyes and ears of the victim for a short period of time (1 minute per success). The ability *Thoughts* can still be used without difficulty while slumbering.

Regeneration: By channeling Anima the spirit may heal physical damage done to its physical form. Each Anima spent heals 1 points worth of damage. No more than 4 points of damage may be healed per round.

Immortal: As long as the spirit is possessing the body the body does not age.

ALTERATIONS

The spirits with the ability to alter the physical body of the host may mould it into a true horror. Alterations make the host body stronger and hardier and may be used to further the ends of the spirit. None of the alterations hurt the physical form of the host as these mystical alterations uses Anima and dark energies to be brought forth. Some minor scarring or aches may be left from some of the more extreme alterations.

Alterations take time to manifest; each alteration (per specific power) takes everything from one hour to twenty-four hours to manifest, depending on the spirit, and only one alteration may be completed at a time. Some spirits do display aberrant abilities, which let them alter the body at a moment's notice after entering the host.

Certain spirits can hide alterations after they have summoned them and call upon them only when needed to better hide among humans. Each time they try to alter a host they have to beat him in a contested test using their Resolve pitted against the victim's Brawn. If the test fails the spirit has to spend half the Anima points of the total cost of the power.

The exact appearance of the alterations varies depending on the spirit. Some who sport talons may spring black jagged horrors from their fingers while others may have sharp spikes of steel protruding from the very flesh of the fingertips. The same goes for night vision, natural armor and other powers. Eyes may look normal or become slits, armor may appear as scales, hard and leathery or whatever seems suitable for the spirit. If a spirit is expelled or falls into a slumber the alterations are cancelled, and it needs to bring them forth again if it wants to make use of them.

Talons/Fangs: These natural weapons cause fatal damage and has a DMG of 3. They are perfect to use as deadly melee weapons.

Anima points: 10

Night Vision: The spirit may see as well in pitch darkness as in broad daylight using this power.

Anima points: 5

Heightened Brawn/Quickness: The body changes, becoming more dexterous or strong. Each increase gives the



body an additional +1 to one of the Aptitudes.

Anima points: 10 (Maximum Aptitude increase +5)

Natural Armor: With the alteration the spirit may harden the body of the host to make it tougher, capable of resisting the most grievous physical attacks.

Anima points: 5/+1 Armor value. (Maximum +5)

Chains/Wires: Prehensile animated chains or wires protrude from the body in whatever fashion the spirit wishes. Each one is three meters long (making this their close combat range). Each one has the same Brawn as the body the spirit inhabits. Every two new appendage the spirit has grant one extra close combat attack per round; beyond this the spirit gets a +2 modifier on all grappling attacks and climbing rolls.

Anima points: 10 per tentacle.

Writhing: All the joints, tendons and tissues become pliable and extremely nimble. The spirit may move using hands, legs or all fours without losing any speed and may turn the head of the body three-hundred and sixty degrees. Besides this they are almost impossible to tie up and may crawl through any space or hole, which fits their head. Most athletic maneuvers are easily performed.

Anima points: 20

Wall Crawl: Either through suckers or an unseen medium the entity may use the body and crawl on walls and ceilings at full speed. Usually they need to be on all fours to run at full speed.

Anima points: 12

Barbs: These may vary a lot in appearance, maybe barbed wires and chains dig their way through the flesh, wrapping themselves around the body of the host, or bony shards protrude from every part of the body. The barbs are used as natural weapons and cause 2 points of fatal damage. Every part of the body is covered and those attacking them with bare hands may suffer damage.

Anima points: 15

Increased Hardiness: Sometimes this power makes the host body grow to enormous proportions. The spirit may increase the amount of hit points the body of the host holds, making it very hard to kill. Each increase gives a +2 to total hit points.

Anima points: 8 (Maximum +15 hit points)

Example: *The demonic spirit Tirogas the Chained has entered a host. He wishes to alter it to better further his evil ends. He is capable of the following alterations: Heightened Brawn, Writhing and Barbs. Tirogas has a Resolve of 8 and an Anima of 57. The host has 50 essence points. Tirogas is capable of completing one alteration per hour. He has hidden in a small storage room in Cinder Lake High School, possessing the body of a biology teacher. The storyteller has beforehand decided what the different alterations will look like.*

As the spirit is free to choose which alteration to begin with, Tirogas first tries to increase his Brawn. The storyteller makes a contested test using Resolve pitted against the victim's Brawn of 2. Tirogas beats the victim and spends 20 points of Anima to increase the attribute with +2. He now has 37 points of Anima left. The body twists and contorts as bulging unnatural muscles grow during the hour, making the skin burst at some places. After this he tries to alter the body again, giving it the alteration Writhing. Once again the storyteller rolls a win for Tirogas. The body twists and contorts; the limbs become unnaturally long and take on a clammy gray appearance. He also has to pay 20 more Anima points for the power, leaving him with 17. Another hour has passed and the host barely resembles a human at this point.

His final alteration is Barbs; the last test is a success as well. Barbed wires and chains fused with razor blades protrude through the skin, shredding the clothes as they wrap around the now gory flesh. He pays 15 Anima points and is left with 2. If he had ran out of Anima he would have used the essence of the host. The host has now contorted into a vile form of pure horror. Tiogas finds a small vent and crawls down the shaft. The night is just beginning and this will be the first of many nights as Tiogas intends to plague the little town of Cinder Lake.

EXORCISM

As the notion of possession is a human concept all spirits have a set of rules forced upon them as their existence is governed by the stories of possession. One thing all spirits (demonic or not) have in common is that they are susceptible to religious symbols and exorcism. What kind of symbols and religions they are susceptible to vary greatly depending on what kind of religion or myth they adhere to.

The most obscure catholic relics may only affect some while others are sensitive to Eastern prayers of banishing. However, if you destroy the object or place they are bound to they may also be destroyed. When exorcised certain spirits are dispelled and can never again reform, others are just sent back to their place of origin. In some cases the exorcist has to have true faith, at other times merely the speaking of the words or the wielding of a religious symbol may be enough, not requiring any real faith.

To be able to perform an exorcism the individual needs to possess the training Theology, or a rank of at least 3 in both Occult and Parapsychology. Before an exorcism may begin you have to research the spirit in order to understand how to get rid of it.



The actual exorcism is a test of will, pitting the exorcist's Cool against the Resolve of the spirit in a contested test. Each success scored by the exorcist reduces the Anima of the spirit by 3. So if an exorcist beats the spirit in the test and scores three successes the spirit would lose 9 Anima points. If the test fails, the exorcist loses the same 2 points of essence for every success the spirit scored. So if the spirit would to win the test and score 2 successes the exorcist would lose 4 points worth of Anima. Usually a test is made every ten minutes or every hour.

While performing an exorcism the surroundings may be subjected to lowered temperature, shaking furniture and a lot of other things. This is due to the dark energies, which do everything in their power to stay in our world and revolt sporadically.

Exorcisms are a hard and demanding task, which can drag out for hours or days. Most spirits stay in slumber if their body is tied down and in the power of an exorcist, only emerging sometimes to speak and harass those around them. When the actual expelling begins the entity is forced to the surface in its full horridness. If the Anima is depleted as a result of an exorcism the creature is expelled. If you wish to have characters "exorcise" curses you may use the same system. The only difference is that the Cool of the exorcist is pitted against the Will of the curse and power points are depleted instead of Anima (see curses below). When a curse is being vanquished it loses the ability to restore power points during the actual exorcism, and cannot begin to stock up on these until 1D/2 hours after a "session" of exorcism has ended. This is why many exorcists work in pairs or threes, never giving the spirit a chance to recuperate while one exorcist is resting up.

Hit it where it hurts: *If you have a more action oriented story you can also assign certain weaknesses to spirits while they are in possession of a body. Some might be particularly susceptible to fire while others might be damaged by bullets and weapons made out of a particular material engraved with certain symbols. It is all up to you and what kind of story you want to tell. A whole campaign can evolve around hunting and battling spirits.*

CURSES

Cursed places or objects cannot be described as a single entity since they have their roots in situations and events most of the time, or are clutters of many different energies, such as stains of evil that have amassed and created a curse.

Curses have the ability to affect individuals on a mental level as well as manipulate the physical world. It is a pure force of spiteful will. This force always tries to recreate certain events; probably the same events that gave rise to it. A murder, a vile blood oath or maybe even a foul ritual may be its focus.

A house built on a place where a massacre of sorts took place may be ruled by the dismayed energies composed of

those who died, trying to act out against anyone in order to bestow the same fate on them as they themselves suffered. Sometimes the ones responsible for the crimes were so scornful that their energies lingered, forever trying to instigate new murders using those who enter their realm.

Often, a curse only has the power to affect the behavior of one person but it may hurt and show horrible things to those within its borders. The one who is influenced starts to dream strange things; these dreams are visions shown to him by the curse. The mood of the afflicted becomes more and more erratic and they never notice negative changes in their behavior, even if someone points them out. In many cases the curse makes them obsessed with finding out more information of what happened and lures them to the regions (if a house or area) where most of the occurrences took place.

As time passes they become more and more aggressive and strange, disconnected from the real world, caring only about the house, object or whatever the source of the curse is. As the curse gains more and more control of the individual it starts to grow in strength, allowing it to affect the physical world. It may move things around, control technology, hardening windows and wood, making these virtually unbreakable. Even walls can begin to bleed and lesser distortions to the Coil may appear.

HOW TO USE A CURSE

In Noctum, curses have some stats. These are: Will, Manipulation, Power and Influence.

Will is used when affecting the one chosen to bring about the curse, **Manipulation** decides to what extent the curse may manipulate the physical realm (and people) by its own devices (moving chairs, sending visions) and **Influence** measures how much sway they have over an individual when trying to control them.

Power ranges from 10 (for “milder” curses) to as much as 50 (for those really nasty ones). Each time a curse makes use of an extravagant manifestation (controlling an individual, moving larger objects or reconstructing the area) one point of power is used. Either the power is restored at a rate of 1 point per hour or all the power may be fully restored at a specific time each day. This system is purposely vague and only put in place to give the storyteller some idea of how often a curse may exert its power.

The only value that is static is the Will of the curse, which ranges from 3 to 10. Influence and manipulation increases as the curse gains control over the chosen individual. Every day or week (depending on the nature of the curse) of game time the storyteller makes a contested test pitting the Will of the curse against the Cool of the chosen. If the curse succeeds either manipulation or influence is increased. As these increase the curse moves toward its goal of instigating the events. Every six to twenty-four hours (up to the storyteller) the affected spends separated

from the curse (outside the area of the house or leaving the cursed necklace behind, etc) manipulation or influence decreases by one. When away from the object or area the affected person feels a longing and becomes quite nervous and irritated, wishing to return as soon as possible. If influence is depleted the person under its sway feel normal and understands that something really strange has been going on.

Psychics work as veritable batteries for curses. Whenever a psychic is within the cursed area the curse gets a +1 to manipulation and Will (for each psychic), and an amount of extra power points (see below) equal to the psychic's Cool times four. Most scholars of the paranormal believe that the mind of a psychic acts as a conduit for these places.

Below the different levels of influence and manipulation are described. They range from 1 to a maximum of 9. The manipulation is mainly constructed to fit a cursed house but if you wish to have a cursed wooded area (object) or other place you may simply come up with suitable powers associated with those areas. In the wilderness the curse may cause trees to fall, vines to snare victims, creeks to dry up or become blood red. It is all about using your imagination. If it fits your gameplay a curse may have a low manipulation score (1-3) from the very beginning in order to give the area a certain “weirdness” from the very start.

MANIPULATION

1: May change the temperature by five degrees Celsius and cause minor but barely noticeable power drains.

2: Can now change the temperature by ten Celsius and cause power drains that are easily noticed as lights may flicker.

3: The curse gains the ability to disrupt nearby water systems; it can clog pipes and make the water black as it mixes with dirt, and switch the heat of the water to hot from cold or vice versa. Pets and animals becomes nervous.

4: Now the curse may control the electrical system even more radically. It may blow circuits or light bulbs by overloading them. Also, it can control power more localized, blacking out certain lights or machines while leaving others working.

5: Water systems may be controlled, shutting them off or on and pipes can be made to burst. It can control electronics to a larger degree, switching them on and off, changing channels and volume. By this stage the energies may even disturb the sleep pattern of those sleeping, waking them up through force of will.

6: The telekinetic energies amassed are now enough to move smaller objects around slowly. Drinking glasses can be made to slide across surfaces, books may fall out of their place and doors can slowly shut close or slide open.

The power generated is enough to disturb telephones, making the phone ring, disconnecting a call and so forth. Lesser sounds (almost too faint to recognize) can be created, such as faint whispers and footsteps. Pets sometimes become aggressive.

7: Larger objects may be moved. Chairs and smaller tables can be brought to slide fast. Doors can be slammed and locked or flung open. The curse may use typewriters, computers and phones to express itself, leaving messages or talking through speakers with eerie voices. The power is so intense that it may power electronic devices even when they are unplugged. Without the aid of any electronics the curse may whisper clearly or produce other tangible sounds, also it can create minor illusions, shapes in the corner of the eye that disappears when someone looks directly at them.

Beyond this the curse controls all vermin (worms, rats, insects) that inhabit the area and can even conjure smaller items: pages of a diary, puddles of blood, an axe, or whatever else that pertains to the situation that it wishes to instigate. These items often appear at “natural” places such as an old box as a way of enticing the chosen individual.

8: Every inanimate object may be moved at a rapid pace. Objects can now be thrown through the air at harmful velocities. Cables may be ripped from the walls to ensnare victims. The curse may send dreams to those sleeping and flashes of horrible images to anyone it wishes inside its area of control. It may harden windows and other material, making it extremely hard to get out.

9: The power has grown and the entire area may become somewhat unstable. Distortions to the Coil may

appear. The walls may bleed and the entire area may be reconstructed as the curse wishes, a house can be turned into an ever-shifting maze. Illusions of all kinds may appear, fully visible. They have no mass but if the curse controls the knife it is “holding” the damage may be real enough.

INFLUENCE

(Affects only the chosen individual)

1: May awaken the person from sleep at all times.

2: The individual becomes slightly more attached to the locale or object and downsides are ignored with a somewhat aggressive demeanor if anyone complains about the place in any way.

3: May make the individual sleepwalk, waking him up at other places.

4: The individual becomes more exploratory and secluded, spending a lot of time digging in the past to try and find out about the place, and also becomes more devoted to taking care of it. The affected may even show up late for work since he spent all night renovating or rearranging. Bizarre objects that are found (macabre facts, weird photos) that tell the tale of the place aren't considered weird or scary; rather the person becomes even more interested. If someone tells him that he is beginning to act peculiar he is capable of lashing out somewhat uncharacteristically.

5: The curse may activate weaknesses (even strengthening such ones as Dark Presence) and may send whatever dreams it wishes to the individual.

6: At this point the afflicted has become more hostile and erratic in his behavior, and often seek solitude in order to better understand the place and its secrets. He can spend hours alone in a room, the attic or basement (if a house is the source) rummaging through old stuff found in the place. He often has grand plans involving writing a book or other thing about the place and what happened there. The curse may send whatever flashing images it wants to the afflicted at any time.

7: By using its will the curse may control the individual in an overwhelming way, making him do things (not violent or extreme things). The curse has to succeed in a contested test using its Will against the Cool of the person. If it succeeds it will gain temporary control over the person lasting 1D minutes.

The overall behavior of the person is now very unsettling. He may threaten or scare others over slights and at times he seems like another person all together.

8: The influence the curse may sway now lasts for 2D+2 minutes and during this time the person may display some violent behavior (slaps, hard shoving).

9: The influence now lasts for 3D+2 minutes at a time and the person can be driven to the point of murder.

FYI

A storyteller can make good use of the different afflictions. How to treat these things depends on what kind of a game you are running. In a setting where demons are central to the story these may be bound to a hellhole and may float around our world, possessing those who carry the right sin. In this kind of setting it might also be appropriate to let their physical forms be affected by holy water and be burned by the touch of a cross.

Curses are always fun to play around with. There is always a back-story to these and a way to solve them, effectively lifting the curse. Some curses may work together with

other creatures. Beings such as an Ocul or Forsaken may be bound to the curse as well, adding even more mysteries and hooks to the story. Cursed items should have a sphere of influence, being able to affect things within a given distance from its location.

When dealing with exorcisms make sure not to make the spirits too powerful. Too much Anima would make it very hard for the characters to succeed. But a powerful spirit can make a great story as well. In this case the characters have to find certain texts and relics before they are able to cast out the spirit; this in itself is a story leading up to an epic and nerve-racking scene of demonic expulsion.

Stains of evil are efficient tools when you want to construct ghostly detective stories. Maybe a character is sitting in his favorite coffee place and starts to notice different persons from day to day. One at the time they display similar strange behavior. The only thing they seem to have in common is that they had cut through that dark alley across the street. As the story unravels the character finds out that the alley has a dark and macabre past. Stains of evil and spirits that may body jump are elusive enemies; it is hard to pin down the bad guy when he hides in different bodies.

Another suspenseful way to use possession is to let it start on a physical level with subtle and slow alterations. The character is now on a deadline and has to solve the mysteries before his body twists into something unnatural, after which he will lose his mind to an unrelenting force.

If you want to have mutations and other similar afflictions in your game you can apply the rules regarding alterations, but make a biological or chemical agent responsible. In this case a cure has to be found before it is too late.

Of course, you shouldn't forget the modern classics, binding a curse or spirit to a website, videotape, email or similar modern-day medium. There are all kinds of ways to have fun with this in order to scare the living daylights out of your players.

I still hear them, in the back of my mind. What the fuck is going on! They should be gone, but they're not. I'm running, hiding from them. Every time I look in the mirror she's there. I even tried to hang myself, but she won't let me die! They won't let me! If you get this note I've been lucky since it means I'm dead. Well, I'm off. I have a meeting with a Mustang and a concrete wall. If I see you again, well then I will fucking kill you! By then I will be dead and it won't matter much. Have a great life, honey.

CHAPTER 15

MINIONS

Rats in a maze. That's what it felt like. The thing that was once Caleb had chased us into an industrial area, into a refinery of some kind. It cornered us at a dead end street. Any second it would come around the corner. We heard it running frantically, growling almost longingly as it did. Silak found a small vent he began kicking in.

After he managed to kick out the grill he shoved me towards it. He was too big to fit but I could get through. He stuffed the box with the talisman in my hand. Somehow he had managed to get his hands on it. I didn't want to leave him but what else could I do? As I crawled into the dirty, steaming vent I heard his guns and then his screams behind me. Was this it? Was I the only one left? Caleb possessed, Victor in the mental asylum, Huxley in all likelihood dead and now Silak....

I crawled out of the vent duct and found myself on a large factory floor. I continued inside but the further in I went the stranger it became. I couldn't find a way out and the machinery ... it was like nothing I had ever seen. Twisted pipes, wires and cogs had been merged with pulsating clumps of flesh, massive arteries and pistons made out of glistening bone. What the hell was going on? I tried to use the night vision on my camera but it was all static, something was interfering with it. I had to find my way using the faint, blood red light streaming out from the perverted machinery.

I navigated the increasingly narrow hallways, doing my best not to touch the throbbing biomechanical walls. I turned the corner and stopped. In the gloom, upon one of the walls I saw a shape. At first I thought it was another piece of bizarre machinery, but then it detached itself from the wall, almost pouring out like some boneless lump of gelatinous flesh before standing up rigid and straight.

It radiated such malice, this creature of the unholy flesh and the foul machine. I turned and ran further into the horrid domain.



This chapter will cover a wide range of antagonists and non-player characters. There are many creatures and beings that are represented here but even so, one shouldn't take this as a hint to reduce the game to an all-out monster hunt (but if that floats your boat go right ahead). You are not obliged to use all or any of the creatures listed; these are in place to give you an idea of what kind of beings the darkness may have spawned (willingly or unwillingly). Just because a storyteller has access to a large number of antagonists it doesn't mean that he has to throw them all at the characters.

The minions run the gamut from harrowing beings born of human suffering and malevolence to "creatures from beyond". What kind of minions you use depends on which kind of horror you want to deliver. Full bloods are otherworldly and can be used to instill fear of the unknown while most half-breeds have recognizable aspects, which reflect the evil of man. Some half-breeds have been "made" by the greater dark ones while others have been born out of pure coincidence.

Never let creatures of darkness become commonplace; they should always be shrouded in mystery. Always consider the power of the creatures; many are quite capable of stomping out a group of characters as easy as we would a bug. Some may actually try to do so but most regard small groups of humans as such a diminutive threat that they rather toy with them, drunk on their own hubris. Some have certain weaknesses that may be used against them.

The antagonists will be described with stats, appearance and "personality". Even so, the storyteller should give the different creatures quirks, variance in appearance and powers, to make them unique. A group of players should never be able to think "*Oh, it's one of those, their weakness is this-and-that, and they have that-and-this kind of power*". Keep them on their toes.

By varying the appearance, powers and amount of hit points of the creatures slightly, players (even if they read this entire section) will never know what to expect. Take a lesser dark one such as the Wossal for example: Give them +1 in Brawn, replace their mane of hair with thin, writhing tentacles and grant them the ability to become half transparent. It is still a Wossal, a more powerful one with a different appearance, but the players will be very careful not having the slightest idea of what they are dealing with. Always keep them guessing.

NATURAL ARMOR AND DAMAGE REDUCTION

Some creatures have natural armor and damage reduction. Natural armor doesn't convert deadly damage to bashing damage like kevlar or ceramic plating do. Nevertheless, natural protection subtracts an amount of damage equal to its armor value or damage reduction. For example, a

creature with a damage reduction or an armor value of 5 would only lose 6 hit points if it sustained an initial damage of 11.

Most creatures of darkness are capable of regeneration. The dark energies work beyond physical matter, as we know it, and can convert themselves to basically anything. Dark ones funnel this force from ambient dark energy in order to reconstruct their bodies when injured.

SLAUGHTERING THE LAMBS

Some creatures in the Minions Chapter can dish out a lot of pain (and instant death) and are capable of eviscerating an entire group of characters in a heartbeat. You need to have the players understand just what kind of threat these beings pose for their characters so they don't rush into things. A good way of dealing with this is to have some "sacrificial lambs" ready. If you believe that your players will rush into things, have an NPC killed in front of the eyes of their characters by a creature. When they see how fast (and insanely painful) a human is brought down by a creature, the player characters are quite likely going to think twice before they stand their ground and try to fight a minion of darkness head on.

EXTREME APTITUDES

Many of the dark ones display Aptitude scores that range far beyond that of humans. Instead of giving them enormous scores we have elected to give them no more than 10 as a maximum score but also attached four different levels. Inhuman (I), Massive (M), Extreme (E) and Beyond (B). Each one of these elevates the creatures capacity to use the Aptitude, often in ways which is not humanly possible. This means that a creature with a lower score than a human might still be much more adept at using its Aptitude than most humans due to the supernatural influences. This affects all rolls that involve the Aptitude in question. If a creature possess any of these levels in an Aptitude the letter will be located within parentheses right after the Aptitude score.

Note: The decrease of difficulty does not affect Close Combat rolls involving Brawn, but helps with all other rolls involving Brawn. It does however increase the damage dealt on a hit and bumps Brawn higher up on the Power Chart.

Inhuman: A 6, 7 or a 8 on the dice is considered a success when the Aptitude is involved. Close Combat Brawn attacks has their damage increased by 3 and the creature counts its Brawn as +2 higher on the Power Chart. Inhuman Quickness adds +1 to movement and +5 extra meters per round.

Massive: A 5, 6, 7 or 8 on the dice is considered a success when the Aptitude is involved. Close Combat Brawn attacks has their damage increased by 5 and the creature counts its Brawn as +6 higher on the Power Chart. Massive Quickness adds +3 to movement and +10 extra meters per round.

Extreme: A 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 on the dice is considered a success when the Aptitude is involved. Close Combat Brawn attacks has their damage increased by 7 and the creature counts its Brawn as +8 higher on the Power Chart. Extreme Quickness adds +6 to movement and +20 extra meters per round.

Beyond: Creatures that has this level in an Aptitude don't even have a score since it is near godlike and a human could never stand a chance to compete with it.

ATTACKS & DEFENSE

Here the normal ways of attacks are simply stated. The type of weapon or means of attack is listed and followed by the damage. Some creatures have a negative defense. This acts as a positive modifier to all that attack them and is a result of their massive size which makes it easier to hit them.

BREEDS

Beings have certain characteristics which are given to them depending on their breed. These characteristics are often the same for the breed even if other things may vary.

EARTHLY

Humans and animals that are untouched by darkness are deemed as earthly; they act and function as expected. When they have lost half of their fatal hit points they get -2 and their movement is halved, when they have five left they get -3 and can only hobble about or crawl and when they are reduced to zero fatal hit points they're dead or otherwise incapacitated and severely injured (they use the same bashing rules as the characters). Keep in mind that the stats of NPC are not derived using the same system as that which is used for generating characters. Same goes for the prerequisites needed to acquire trainings.

DEFILED

The defiled are humans that have been affected by the darkness. They are more of our world than of darkness but often have powers and abilities that separate them from humans. All defiled have low light vision; they can see if there is some ambient light. With only starlight they get a -2 modifier on all rolls that require vision, but under other circumstances they see as well as they would in daylight. They bleed and react to damage as humans if not otherwise stated. The defiled have the remnants of a human soul but have moved beyond mentality. Only a few are capable of using magic of human design. Defiled are evil in the deepest sense of the word since they are very much human, being able to enjoy their increase of power and gruesome acts even further motivated by the dark ones.

HALF-BREEDS

These creatures are warped by darkness to an extent that makes them very inhuman. They possess greater powers and are often extremely hard to kill. Half-breeds can see perfectly well in total darkness and can take a lot of physical punishment. When reduced to one third of their hit points they get a -3 modifier and their movement is halved. They do register pain to some degree and may become dazed at times but since they have a different physique it is impossible to inflict a *critical hits* on them. They may bleed (or ooze miasmatic sludge) but aren't affected by the loss. They can handle extreme climates and depravation and exhaustion far better than any human. Most half-breeds can be affected and killed by drugs and poisons but the amount required is staggering. However, they are virtually immune to all diseases. Most half-breeds are able to see hidden gateways and inactive distortions to the Coil and often use them to flee, hide or travel when necessary. Many half-breeds are horrifying concepts and fears given life by dark energies. Some are sadistic and malicious; the part of them that is still human enables them to derive pleasure from their acts.

FULL BLOODS

These beings are the purest creatures of darkness that have managed to enter our world. They are rare and immensely powerful. They need no sustenance whatsoever other than dark energies. They may only be killed by decapitation (if possible) or die when their hit points are reduced to zero; they are of course impervious to *critical hits*. Full bloods are also totally impervious to pain. They have vast powers and are virtually indestructible. They can see in most wavelengths of light and with no need for air they never get exhausted. Needless to say, poisons and similar substances cannot harm them, nor can diseases.

Full bloods are utterly otherworldly. The weaker full bloods (the Alsekthaals in particular) may enjoy and immerse themselves in vile acts to some degree, but this is due to the fact that they have taken on some of humanity's characteristics. Their proximity to humans has affected them. Vaakals are stronger and can only mimic human behavior. They don't take any pleasure in what they are doing and neither do they dislike it. They are only interested in survival.

MYSTIFICATION

These creatures have no real known origin. No one really knows what powers made them, what they are, or where they come from.

PROCLIVITIES

Proclivities describe the different powers and drawbacks of minions. Some powers have a Ratio. The ratio shows how many times per twenty-four hours the creature may use the power. If a power has a ratio of 3 the creature is able to use it 3 times during a twenty-four-hour period. Many creatures (at least those aware of their true origin) use their powers with care since this uses up precious dark energies, which they channel from the Coil or themselves.

ADDITIONS

Some creatures have some special circumstances or other details that may need description. These are listed under Additions. Sometimes this entails some habits, plot suggestions involving the creature or other similar topics.

THE FEAR

Some creatures may drive a human mad with fear. These creatures have psyche point loss, fear score and sometimes a modifier listed. These work exactly as stated in the Broken Mind chapter. When a character confronts a minion he has make a Cool test with the modifier stated under the creature in order to reduce the fear score, and if he can't reduce the fear score completely he loses the listed amount of psyche points under the creature and of course reacts according to the fear score he ended up on. At the storyteller's discretions some vile encounters may cause instant mental disorders (and very often hysteria) on a completely failed roll. Some creatures are too horrifying for the human mind to comprehend.

ADEPT

Breed: Defiled

These men and women have parted with their mentality and the remnants of their souls are stained with dark energy. Some work actively for a sect or other organization while others have become Adepts on their own by their evil ways. Some of them think their powers have been derived from the worship of demons while others believe themselves to have been changed by radical genetic experimentation, depending on the circumstances surrounding their change. Many cults and sects like to recruit from the law enforcement

Most Adepts look human and only through a medical examination (you have to look real hard for anomalies) can they be detected. They may come from every walk of life. Their personality varies but they *are* prone to sadism and violence, and often have depraved sexual and violent appetites. The stats below are in accordance with Adepts working as assassins or hired firepower in service of the darkness. Other individuals may be Adepts as well but

with very different stats and skills, some nothing more than twisted and disfigured madmen who stalk back alleys and abandoned buildings in packs.

STATS

Attention: 3(5)

Cool: 3 (5)

Brains: 2

Gut Feeling: 2

Brawn: 4 (7)

Quickness: 3

Clout: 2

Reaction: 2 (5)

Defense: 2

HP: 16

Movement: +1

Essence: 30

Attacks: As per weapon or unarmed.

Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Contacts 1, Fast Talk 2, Interrogation 2, Investigation 2, Search 2, Security 1, Shooting 2, Stealth 2, Vehicle 1.

Trainings: Martial Arts or Auto Fire Tradecraft or Electronic Surveillance.

PROCLIVITIES

Surge: Due to their connection to their baser instincts they are capable of putting themselves in a state of berserk. They enjoy all the benefits of the highest stage on the Fight or Flight monitor but suffer none of the drawbacks. This makes them extremely dangerous and the changes in the stats can be seen under their aptitudes and skills in parentheses. They don't become exhausted after leaving the state of berserk. The berserk is in effect until all threats or prey they hunt is out of sight and lingers for another five minutes after this.

Ratio: 4

Regeneration: They heal 2 hit points every hour and may basically recuperate from anything that doesn't kill them outright. Severely broken spine, broken neck, severe head injuries or massive damage done to several internal organs are sufficient to kill them though. Even though they bleed they cannot die from blood loss.

Hardy: Their bodies are made tougher by the dark energies and they subtract 2 from all damage inflicted upon them.

Additions: Adepts are often used as henchmen since they can move among humans unnoticed. They are quite weak compared to many other creatures but compared to normal humans they are immensely powerful.

ALSEKTHAAL

Breed: Full blood

These are a weak type of full bloods, which have taken on the role of hunters. None can match them in their ability to adapt and kill. At will they may look human, taking the form of an attractive man or woman. Their true form is a vaguely female-looking humanoid creature, which stands

almost three meters tall. Their bodies consist of a diffuse bone-white jagged carapace. Their jaws are massive, filled with huge teeth of a silvery metal-like appearance and they have long fleshy wires ending in barbs instead of hair. On their backs a pair of withered wings can be seen and their bodies are unnaturally thin, which seems as a paradox to their physical strength.

Alsekthaals live to maim and destroy, that is their purpose, and they loathe mankind. Most serve the Harbingers. Even though they crave no sustenance they devour parts of their victims and often save parts as trophies. As they know they cannot kill indiscriminately they sometimes hunt in the slums to satisfy themselves, killing those no one will miss. Whenever the dark ones wish to slay someone (particularly unbound that don't wish to conform) they send out an Alsekthaal. The creature's greatest strength lies in its incredible speed.

They tend not to learn much of human society or history. Even though they have been with us since the beginning their only passion lies in killing. They are hunters of man and creature, not scholars. When they speak their voices have a metallic and unnatural grinding sound which is extremely unnerving to say the least. This is of course not the case when they assume human form. None of the dark ones truly knows but it is believed that the appearance of this creature is a twisted version of a race the dark ones reaped several billion years ago.

STATS

<i>Attention: 5 (M)</i>	<i>Cool: 5 (I)</i>
<i>Brains: 3</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 4</i>
<i>Brawn: 6 (M)</i>	<i>Quickness: 3 (M)</i>
<i>Clout: - (4)</i>	<i>Reaction: 3 (M)</i>
<i>Defense: 4</i>	<i>HP: 40</i>
<i>Movement: +8</i>	<i>Essence: -</i>
<i>Attacks: Claws and Teeth: 6</i>	
<i>Skills: Athletics 4, Close Combat 2, Search 3, Stealth 4</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Flight: Their wings have nothing to do with this ability but Alsekthaals may fly at roughly 150 km/h.

Transparent: The creature may become transparent which renders it virtually invisible. All tests involving attacking it with ranged weapons or spotting the creature is done with a -3 modifier.

Rapid: They may move at extreme speeds by channeling dark energies. They may perform three actions in succession, including increasing their movement. They get no drawbacks or negative modifiers when using this power and it is basically impossible to hit them with any kind of attack while they use it. This gives them a +10 to their Reaction when calculating initiative and the Bullet vs Hoofing rules do not apply to them while this power is in effect.

Ratio: 6



Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every round.

Damage reduction: They subtract 5 from all damage done to them.

Shape shifters: They can shift into two attractive human forms, one female and one male, which they use when they walk among us.

Additions: Some live among us, often in high society, but most live under ground in dark and forgotten sewers and abandoned buildings when they don't roam the Coil. Those that live among us are often much more sophisticated, possessing higher scores in Brains and have social and administrative skills as they often hold important positions of power.

Psyche Points: 1D+2

Fear Score: 10

Modifier: -4

ATLAS

Breed: Defiled/Half-breeds

Atlas is the elite force of Prometheus. They obey blindly and perform their duties with diligence. These soldiers are constantly injected with a drug called ambrosia. This is developed from the DNA found in the spine of Luc and heightens the physical prowess of the soldiers. Atlas soldiers look and act human...most of the time that is.

STATS

Attention: 3	Cool: 3
Brains: 2	Gut Feeling: 2
Brawn: 5 (<i>Inhuman if mutated</i>)	Quickness: 3
Clout: 2	Reaction: 3
Defense:	HP: 17
Movement:	Essence: -
Attacks: <i>Combat Knife:</i> 4, <i>P90:</i> 4, <i>Claws (when mutated):</i> 3	
Skills: <i>Athletics</i> 2, <i>Close Combat</i> 3, <i>Contacts</i> 2 (<i>military</i>), <i>First Aid</i> 2, <i>Repairs</i> 2, <i>Search</i> 3, <i>Security</i> 2, <i>Shooting</i> 4, <i>Stealth</i> 2, <i>Survival</i> 2.	
Trainings: <i>Auto Fire</i> , <i>Martial Arts</i> , <i>Sniping</i> .	



PROCLIVITIES

Regeneration: Besides granting these soldiers heightened strength and stamina the ambrosia lets them heal very rapidly. They die and suffer from pain as normal humans do but they heal very fast. Atlas regain 1 hit point every ten minutes.

Mutation: Whenever an Atlas has his hit points reduced to one fourth of his total hit points he has to make a Cool test with a -3 modifier. If he fails he mutates unwillingly. This is a result of the unstable nature of the ambrosia drug. His eyes become white, his skin turns gray and hardened and his nails turn into claws. He also bulges with unnaturally large muscles. In this state their Brawn becomes *Inhuman* and their hardened skin grants them 3 in natural armor. They become animalistic, only using bare hands attacking every foe in sight, disregarding their own lives. They can distinguish friend from foe but those getting too close or move towards them in a threatening manner will be ripped to shreds. Only when all threats are gone will they change back and then fall unconscious, remaining so for 2D hours.

Additions: Atlas cannot see inactive gateways or distortions like other half-breeds and they don't have augmented vision and are affected as humans by poisons, exhaustion etc. They are also affected by *critical hits* in their human form.

(In mutated state)

Psyche points: 2

Fear Score: 8

Modifier: -2

BOGEYMAN

Breed: Defiled

These unremittably insane and crazed people are chosen to be the ultimate muscle of Hostis. All are serial killers, mass murderers or spree killers. They are kept in check (to some extent) by the Harbingers that whisper in their minds. They may look and act very differently but most (if they put some effort into it) can pass as normal and sane for a while. But when they show their true natures their sadistic, psychotic and violent, personality, is evident. Many have a tendency to play bizarre cat-and-mouse games with their victims before killing them.

The Harbingers have taught them to use their insanity and homicidal tendencies in a sly manner, using stealth and intelligence when prudent. This makes them extremely dangerous. Many are skilled in the art of fitting in, giving them the opportunity to get very close to their victims if they wish. Their greatest asset is their versatility.



STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 4	<i>Cool:</i> 3
<i>Brains:</i> 3	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 4 (I)
<i>Brawn:</i> 3	<i>Quickness:</i> 3
<i>Clout:</i> 2	<i>Reaction:</i> 3
<i>Defense:</i> 2	<i>HP:</i> 16
<i>Movement:</i> +1	<i>Essence:</i> 20
<i>Attacks:</i> Butcher Knife: 2, Chainsaw: 5,	
<i>Skills:</i> Academics 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Contacts 2, (insane asylums, child services), Fast Talk 2, Forensics 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Psychology 2, Search 3, Security 2, Stealth 3, Survival 1.	
<i>Trainings:</i> Slight of Hand, Booby-Traps	

PROCLIVITIES

Masochists: They revel in the pain of others but in their own as well. Instead of losing focus when they feel pain they become excited and decisive. They gain a +1 for every quarter of hit points they lose. They are strengthened by pain instead of weakened by it. However, when they only have 5 or less left they get a -2 modifier due to the sheer "structural" damage to their bodies.

Insight: They are without a doubt insane but due to the fact that they can view themselves through the eyes of their masters they have been granted a special insight into other people's darker sides, and seeds of insanity. This isn't an exact science but they seem to know what buttons to push, and may often pinpoint certain events in a person's childhood or past which have led up to deviant passions, regrets and sorrow. They use this to lure and snare victims. In order to activate this power they have to make a Gut

Feeling roll. The more successes they accumulate the greater their analytical accuracy will become.

Sight: Bogeymen are so close to their dark masters that they may see passages and distortions to the Coil and use them as if they were half-breeds.

Eeriness: This ability is instinctive and comes on whenever they need it. Since they are linked to the Harbingers they may affect the real world to some extent (unwittingly as it may be) like the Harbingers affect their own realms. Whenever suitable, small things may happen when a Bogeyman is hunting or stalking a victim. Doors may slide open, floorboards may squeak, radios may come on and fuses can blow. All these minor things happen in a way that benefits the Bogeyman. They aren't aware of this ability (neither are the Harbingers) but it helps them a great deal in their "work". None of these things are overt and always seem to be circumstantial.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every minute.

Touched by the kings: As they are close to their masters they may feed off their power and diminish any type of damage if they choose to. When they activate this power they divide all damage done to them by two. The power lasts for 1D +7 rounds.

Ratio: 6

Eternal doors: By creating a small distortion they may travel rapidly. By stepping inside a dark small area and close the door behind them (closet, pantry, small bathroom) they will reappear in a close-by similar area in the vicinity (nearby closet or other similar place). They usually travel as far as possible from their foes within the domicile (house, apartment or the same floor if it is a large house) but exactly where they reappear is random. They have to close the door behind them and the door has to be closed in the area they appear in. If they know the place well they may transport themselves with accuracy between the different locations. Bogeymen usually have a bricked up and hidden room with a closet where they live. This lets them hide very effectively if they need it. Needless to say, they often have a lot of closets in their houses and apartments. If they have grappled someone and succeed with a Cool test, -2 modifier, they may take the person with them in their travel. Some are more skilled than others and the ratio varies accordingly.

Ratio: 3-12

Additions: Bogeymen suffer from a variety of weaknesses as well as mental- and personality disorders that often affect them in a negative way. Many times they lose control, as the Harbingers cannot watch them all the time. Most suffer from a narcissistic personality and a hubris, which can make them act rather stupid. Never forget that the passion they have for killing, molesting and torturing exceed their willingness to serve at times. To these bastards the mission is secondary to having fun while indulging in its execution.

CARVERS

Breed: Half-breed

They have had many shapes and forms, and it is unclear where they come from. Many dark ones believe that they once were creatures spawned in Dens of War but no one knows for sure. These days they roam the Coil, often serving a Transplanter in a Site of Sickness. Some cross over to our world on their own to inflict pain and to claim victims.

Carvers see themselves as part surgeons and part butchers. They have the bodily shape of a human but are much larger and bulky, moving lumbering, but capable of enormously athletic manoeuvres considering their size. They have no eyelids and their black globes peer out on the world with intense hunger. Their huge mouths are without lips and filled with flat, dull, grinding teeth. Their flesh is extremely pale and clammy to the touch. It is semi-transparent and one can see black pulsating veins connected to what looks like electrical cords and tubes. One of their hands is missing, ripped off, and shoved down the bloody stump is a large rusted and mechanic device, its size out of proportion. This device is filled with blades, power saws, drills, rolls of duct tape, a nasty staple gun and powerful nail gun. The creature usually appears in dark and rugged clothing and wears a bloodstained thick leather apron, more fitting a metal worker than a butcher. They can talk but when they do their voices come out twisted and in reverse. These vile creatures have turned death and mutilation into an art.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 4	<i>Cool:</i> 2
<i>Brains:</i> 1	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 1
<i>Brawn:</i> 8 (I)	<i>Quickness:</i> 2
<i>Clout:-</i>	<i>Reaction:</i> 3
<i>Defense:-</i>	<i>HP:</i> 30
<i>Movement:</i> +1	<i>Essence:</i> -
<i>Attacks:</i> Chainsaw /Hydraulic metal cutter: 5, Nail gun (range 2 m): 4	
<i>Skills:</i> Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Nail Gun: 2, Repairs 2, Search 2, Stealth 2.	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Armor: They are partly mechanized and as a result they have a natural armor of 5.

Regenerate: They regain 1 hit point every 10 seconds (every 3 rounds).

Armed to the teeth: From their twisted apparatus they may bring forth virtually any blade or power tool. They have chainsaw blades, drills, saws, axes and all kinds of weapons. Cogs spin and steam spews forth as the weapon of choice shifts into place.

Duct tape: They use this in their art as well as for combat. In combat they are capable of extremely rapid “packaging” of a victim. They may tie together two body parts, or completely seal in a victim’s head and face with duct tape. This is done in just one round but the creature has to be within brawling distance. Tape comes flying out of the device as the Carver, with enormous speed, wraps the victim. To be successful the Carver has to pass a Close Combat test. If the face is covered the victim is blinded and also begins to suffocate. To get free the victim has to pass a Brawn test with a -3 modifier. Each attempt takes five rounds.

Staples: Using the apparatus within close combat range the creature may use large staples to attack a victim. The staple gun moves as fast as a sewing machine. With this ability the creature may staple shut a persons mouth, or staple together one part of their body with another or even staple them to a nearby object. The actual stapling only causes between 1 and 2 points of damage but if one tries to rip free 1 additional point of damage is inflicted. It takes about 30 seconds to get free without additional damage if taking it slow. The carver can also use the nail gun to fasten victims to walls and such from a distance.

Dismember: The creature has to remain passive for one round in order to find a perfect angle of attack and then make a Quickness + Close Combat test with a -2 modifier. If successful the attack causes an instant critical hit that severs the limb it targeted (the attack reduces the individual to 2 hit points. If the victim already has 2 or less he is instantly killed. If unsuccessful the attack misses. Only by using their natural weapons may they employ this attack.

Deadly work of art: They take great pleasure in making art of their prey. They have the ability to surgically connect and keep parts of a person alive by transferring life from a relatively undamaged victim. By immobilising a person and connecting cables to his abdomen and then connecting these to the body parts of another victim as they cut them off, the body parts remain alive. They use this ability to divide a person into dozens of parts, which they weld to steel constructs. The human can still feel all the pain in their dismembered form, as can the human who is used as a source of life. This can look disturbing to say the least; a headless torso connected by wires to arms, legs and pulsating organs all the while the head forms a silent scream of excruciating pain. The Carver derives nourishment from this in the form of dark energy. They often have several of these active and always have to keep one intact. It is believed that they used to be powered by energies given to them by their masters, but now they have to sustain themselves. If all of their art is destroyed they lose all their ability to heal and also sustain 2 points of damage each hour until they have created a new set. They are never very far from their art, as they need to go there physically from time to time. They also need to look after the human who acts as the “battery” to ensure that they stay alive. Most times they spread them out, hiding their sources of nourishment.

Psyche Points: 1D+2

Fear Score: 12

Modifier: -3



CARVER

CHAINER

Breed: Half-breed

Beneath the legal facades of strip clubs and in the cellars of boarded-up houses the revolting business of sadistic torture and snuff movie production festers. The victims suffer and are subjected to unimaginable pain and fear before they are killed. On some rare occasions a distortion is nearby, and in these cases a Chainer is born from the death of one of these victims. Chainers are the tormented souls of those who have been tortured and killed in the making of these movies. They stalk the Coil, entering through gateways and distortions in the redlight districts.

Chainers resemble humans to some degree but they are utterly twisted. Their limbs are contorted and they are wrapped in leather straps and bondage chains, often these restraints were present when they died. A Chainer's skin is dripping with blood as the straps and chains cut into its flesh. Many have knife cuts, burn marks and bullet wounds, which are telltales of how they died. Their faces are decorated with leather masks, mouth straps or other sadosexual paraphernalia. Their torsos have a red gory line that may split open and reveal a gaping revolting maw filled with jagged teeth.

The sexually enticing moans they utter clash with their perverted and horrific appearance. Chainers wish to force their suffering on to others, killing them through torture after prolonged sexual abuse. Many times they walk on all fours in ways impossible to most as their limbs have no limitation on how they may twist. Some are unbound while Asmodai enslaves others.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 2
<i>Brains:</i> 1	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 2
<i>Brawn:</i> 4	<i>Quickness:</i> 5(I)
<i>Clout:</i> -(2)	<i>Reaction:</i> 4
<i>Defense:</i> 3	<i>HP:</i> 20
<i>Movement:</i> +5	<i>Essence:</i> -
<i>Attacks:</i> Chains & Straps: 3, Maw 4.	
<i>Skills:</i> Athletics 4, Close Combat 3, Search 3, Stealth 3	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Shape shifter: They may take on the appearance of an average-looking human when walking the streets in search of a victim. They only have one appearance they may assume.

Squeeze: They may crawl and squeeze through any opening in which their head fits.

Wall climbers: Chainers may crawl freely on ceilings and walls.

Siren call: By uttering a whisper of moans (unheard by all but the affected) they may summon a random victim. The person has to be sexually attracted to the gender of the Chainer. The call can affect a particular person whom they have seen before or any random victim. The call can be heard within a radius of three hundred meters. Chainers use this to lure victims into dark alleys in order to have their way. To succeed they have to beat the victim in a contested test, Cool versus Cool.

Ratio: 3

Damage reduction: They are born from pain and suffering. Their forms are well adapted to deal with physical punishment and they only sustain a fourth of all damage dealt to them.

Regeneration: They heal 2 hit points every minute.

Chains and straps: Chainers have control over their restraints and may use them to make two melee attacks each round. These weapons cause a bashing damage. They have a reach of four meters and are quite apt when grappling.

Maw: If they succeed with a grapple they may use their torso maw which inflicts fatal damage.

Additions: Chainers can (like Forsaken or Oculs) be bound to an event or an object that may vanquish them if solved or destroyed. Some of the more sophisticated Chainers use the Internet as a means to trap prey.

Psyche Points: 1D -1

Fear Score: 6

Modifier: -2



CHAINER

Hey, have you seen Dwayne? He went out to the redlight some nights ago but he hasn't come back. It seems he has become more and more obsessed with his new hobby. He's a grown man and can do whatever he wants, but still. I worry somewhat about him. I should never have taken him to that strip club. One look at the girls crawling around for money was all it took. He was hooked.

Did you know that he actually moved out of his old place some weeks ago? He moved to a smaller apartment with almost no rent. He throws all of his money on hookers these days. I went looking for him last night; I went over to Lilly's place (that chick who did that thing with the glow stick at your bachelor party for twenty bucks). Dwayne had taken a shine to her and was a regular, but Lilly said she hadn't seen him in three days. But she told me something really strange.

Dwayne had been doing her as usual, but suddenly he stopped. He sat up with a smile on his face and took off his pants (nothing else), and started to go outside the apartment. Lilly asked him what was wrong (she just wanted to get paid I guess) and Dwayne started to smile even more, not looking at her, and he said he was in love. Then he walked out the door. She looked out her window and saw him wander off, barefoot and everything, into a back alley. Since then no one has seen him.

Something is obviously wrong, but what? Was he high? Anyhow, I'm going out to look for him tonight and if you have time I would like you to come. It's quite a crime-riddled neighbourhood, and I don't really like to walk around there on my own asking questions. When I left Lilly's place I felt watched; probably my imagination, but Dwayne IS missing. If you want to come, be at Dwayne's place at seven. Maybe we can find something to go on there? I filed a report with the cops but you know the score.

Hope to see you later.

DEATH DWELLER

Breed: Defiled

Death Dwellers are often unbound, but at other times they serve a more powerful dark one. These creatures were once human. Some are the result of occult experiments, bizarre medical trials or formed from human tragedy. They are fashioned from corpses which are relatively fresh (i.e., cannot be too decomposed and must be fairly intact). A few days after awakening their bodies have completed restructured themselves. They lose all hair, burn off all body fat and their skin stretches over their bones. They become muscular and sinewy and their skin cracks open at places, as if it was made of dry mud. Their eyes turn pitch black and gleam like those of a cat at night while their teeth become sharp and jagged.

Death Dwellers are driven by a hunger to eat the flesh and organs of humans and animals. They are agile hunters and alternate between moving like a professional human athlete and feral creature, squatting, cocking their head as they listen and sniffing the ground for their prey. They can run as fast on all fours as they do upright.

They still understand whatever language they knew before the change but can only communicate with screeches and hisses. They retain next to no memory of their former lives. Many run naked, while others wear whatever tattered rags they've found. They sometimes hunt in packs. They take no physical damage from light but prefer to stay in the shadows. Some use bare hands while others pick up pieces of pipe, a fire axe or whatever crude weapon they can find. When they encounter enemies with firearms, they tend to use diversions and thrown weapons to level the playing field. Many times they play with their victims, stalking them far longer than needed before taking them down just for sport. Some even capture victims alive, keeping them trapped a while (tossing them in a hole, barring them in a room, etc.) and feed them rats and stray animals so the Dweller can feed upon the human later.

STATS

Attention:	Cool: 3
Brains: 1	Gut Feeling: 5 (I)
Brawn: 4	Quickness: 4 (I)
Clout:-	Reaction: 4 (I)
Defense:	HP: 16
Movement: +5	Essence:-
Attacks: Bites: 3, Unarmed: 2, improvised melee weapon: 2-5	
Skills: Close Combat 3, Search 4, Stealth 4, Survival (tracking) 3	
Trainings:	

PROCLIVITIES

Flesh to Flesh: For every kilo of fresh (dead no more than 24 hours) human flesh they consume they regain 1 hit point. They can consume 0.5 kilos per five seconds.

Improved Immune System: They are virtually immune to illness and infection.

Extreme Kinesthetics: They are very aware of their surroundings, which in combination with their athleticism allows them to perform astounding acts of mobility. Dwellers can match the top free runners in the world in their feral speed.

Tireless: Dwellers possess an astounding endurance and are nearly impossible to exhaust. They can hang from a pipe or run for hours, and fight off multiple opponents for minutes without breaking a sweat.

Hard biters: They have exceptionally strong jaw muscles and sharp teeth which allow them to inflict grievous wounds with their bites.

Dine & Dash: If their victim is standing relatively still or moving slowly and the Dweller is in hiding, he may perform a fast and vicious attack and return into hiding again. In order to be successful, the Dweller must be within 10 meters from the victim (can be hiding in the shadows, hanging from the ceiling or whatever, as long as the victim doesn't see him) and be able to focus for 1 combat round, performing the attack on the second. The Dweller rushes past the victim, bites him (using an unmodified Brawl test) and returns into hiding. The victim may attack the creature as it runs past but does so with a -3 modifier. If the victim runs (away from the area) or sees the creature (the player must actively ask for a Spot test after the attack and have his character search for the Dweller) this type of attack is not possible. If a pack of Dwellers has circled a prey, hiding in the shadows, this method is a pretty sure way to bring the prey down.

Additions: These beings are excellent to use as an introduction to the hidden world. Characters may stand a chance against them and since they are formed from dead human beings, you can have a story revolve around a close friend to the characters who has disappeared and actually turned into a Death Dweller. Dwellers can be found in the Coil, sewers, condemned housing projects and in the desolated back alleys of the dilapidated slums, lurking unseen near a food source.

Psyche Points: 2

Fear Score: 1

Modifier: -

DIANAUT

Breed: Mystification

These utterly bizarre and capricious beings have been around for many eons. No one knows what the Dianauts want or where they come from. They live in the minds of the mentally ill and of late even in the darker regions of the Internet, and they travel through all means of electronic devices.

They are prophets of the strange and dark, heralds of unspoken dreams, and they use strange ways and methods to reach their goals, which in the long run can be unfathomable by most. The only time their exploits drew attention to them was in 1966 when some knew them as Mothmen due to their exploits in West Virginia. Some believed they tried to stop the Silver Bridge from collapsing; in the end this accident took 46 lives.

Dianauts have no real physical form and take on whatever appearance they wish. Either as a means to be vague and mysterious by purpose, or because they lack the ability to fully grasp human perception, they take on bizarre and strange appearances. They can appear as weird-looking and macabre clowns, mothmen, glowing eerie-looking vapors or even more ghoulish forms. Their voices are even stranger, they talk backwards, but still intelligible; they talk in many voices but nonetheless only with one voice. They incite others to do their bidding.

For some reason these beings try to prevent major disasters or other similar events from time to time. But they don't perceive the world as humans do. Their ability to prophesies makes them act and think very differently.

For example, if they wish to stop a spree killer they may use a human as their instrument. They see to it that the person they are controlling travels across the country to sabotage the street lights in an intersection. This leads to a car accident. In this car accident a handyman is killed. This man was supposed to fix the stairs at the spree killer's mother's house. The mother needs to use the stairs and so uses it even if it isn't fixed. It breaks, injuring the woman who is rushed off to the hospital. As the spree killer gets a call from the police or paramedics he hurries off to the hospital in order to be at his mother's side. In his stress he forgets to close the door and a neighbor calls the super about it. The super is nosy, and so he goes into the apartment and finds evidence (weapons, plans or whatever) of the tenant's intent to commit multiple murders and the super calls the police. The police find the evidence and arrest the man. The Dianaut has now prevented the killings of many, killing only one. Why not kill the murderer you might ask? Dianauts see things we don't and these series of events were necessary to avoid affecting the timeline in a detrimental manner; they take care when controlling the ways of the world using means that seem strange and unnecessary.

They usually know the exact time and date of the event they try to prevent, and often give hints of this to the one they control, but they always speak in cryptic riddles, saying things which initially sound as gibberish but will prove profound truths as the story unveils. When asked what they are and where they come from, they can say they are ghosts, aliens, demons, or whatever else strikes their fancy at the moment. As with the rest of their behavior their names are often utterly weird and somewhat incoherent.



STATS

Attention: 10 (B)

Cool:

Brains: 10 (B)

Gut Feeling:-

Brawn:-

Quickness:-

Clout:-

Reaction: 6 (B)

Defense:-

HP:-

Movement:-

Essence:-

Attacks:-

Skills: Search 5, (Besides this they have all the theoretical knowledge they will ever need).

Trainings:

PROCLIVITIES

Mental link: Whenever an individual has an Anxious or lower mentality the Dianaut may link with him. This is also possible if the person is suffering from hallucinations, schizophrenia or psychosis. When it is linked it may manifest (only visible to the victim) and speak directly. When the person's mentality goes above Anxious (or if the disorder allowing the link to exist is cured) the link is severed.

Illusions: When linked a Dianaut may show the individual all kinds of visions. The visions may be small or grandiose and can consist of virtually anything. The individual perceives the illusions as real. The creature may not harm the victim physically but illusions of force fields may stop the individual, and damage done by the illusions cause pain.

Sleepwalker: This ability may be used when the victim is sleeping; the Dianaut makes the victim walk in his sleep and may perform most actions but they are sluggish and slow to react. This power is often employed when the creature wishes to make a person travel or do certain things against his will. Usually it takes the individual eight hours to awaken and regain control.

Prophecy: This is their unique ability that lets them see into the past, future and to remote places of the present. It is extremely hard to explain the specifics of this ability but they can see into the realms of the Coil (maybe even beyond) and basically have access to all information they need to complete their task (whatever it may be). But this ability is probably the reason for their strange ways and demeanor. Seeing all of creation, destiny, past, present, the future and beyond, all at the same time, makes them view things in a totally different way.

Digital link: For the last hundred years or so they have been communicating through our technology. They have used phones, Internet, television, radios and many other things as a means of communication. They can contact any person they wish through these things. Calling from numbers which don't exist and talking through static on the TV are means of communication that they frequently use. In recent years they have posed as EVPs (Electronic Voice Phenomena) as a way of affecting those who believe in the paranormal.

Dreams: They may send whatever dreams they wish to whomever they wish.

Additions: The Dianauts serve a greater plan, a plan that is incomprehensible even to the most ancient dark one. Ahriman and the seven kings are aware of their existence but there is little they can do since these creatures don't seem to have any kind of physical form or source of power. On some occasions these beings have caused wanton destruction, but most times they prevent large-scale accidents or disastrous events from taking place. Why some are hindered and others are not is unknown.

These creatures are excellent to use as a Deus ex machina or a force majeure in stories. As these beings know virtually everything there is to know, they can be used in all kinds of situations to build a story or motivate the characters.

(Varies depending on their manifestation)

Psyche Points:

Fear Score:

Modifier:

DIGGER

Breed: Mystification

Diggers are huge, surreal and lumbering creatures. They wander the Shadow Paths tirelessly. They are the ones who designed (and are still designing) the Shadow Paths. They constantly dig and reconstruct these paths to bring some order out of the chaos, and as a means to separate the realms.

Diggers are about three meters tall and weigh about two tons. Their arms are long and they drag their knuckles along the ground when they walk. They only have two thick fingers on each hand and their legs are extremely small and short compared to the rest of their physique. They have no mouth and two small crystalline eyes set in the front of their small heads. Their bodies seem to be made out of some unidentifiable rock material and they move slowly, never uttering a sound other than the rumbling the movement of their limbs cause.

They aren't aggressive and usually don't pay much attention to anyone. However, if someone repeatedly attacks them or makes too much of a ruckus around them they will walk over and crush the source of the annoyance.

STATS

<i>Attention: 2</i>	<i>Cool:3(M)</i>
<i>Brains: 1</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 1</i>
<i>Brawn: 10 (M)</i>	<i>Quickness: 1</i>
<i>Clout:-</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense:-</i>	<i>HP: 40</i>
<i>Movement:- (+5)</i>	<i>Essence:-</i>
<i>Attacks: Stone Fists: 5</i>	
<i>Skills: Repairs (tunneling): 4, Search:3</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Powerful: Their huge fists cause fatal damage (depending on the situation) and they are capable of creating huge and deep openings in the walls of the paths (and most other materials) with one blow.



Made of stone: They are basically made out of stone and very hard to injure. They subtract 8 from all damage they sustain. This also grants them immunity to fire, corrosives, electricity, illness, poisons and *critical hits*.

Rebuilding: By consuming stone they may regenerate 5 hit point per round.

Roll: When they need to travel faster they may kneel down, becoming a huge round block of rock and roll at a speed of 50 meters per round. This gives them a movement of +6 in chase situations.

Additions: They seldom venture into other realms or our world and they need no kind of sustenance, and have no need of air. Diggers are vital, without out them the Coil would spin out of control; they are the working ants of this bizarre world. They don't speak any languages but can communicate with images telepathically, and using this they can understand other creatures somewhat. Diggers are neutral, not caring for much other than order in the paths and they might even point lost travelers in the right direction if they understand where they wish to go.

Psyche Points: 2

Fear Score: 1

Modifier: -

DISCIPLE

Breed: Defiled

At the brink of becoming half-breeds these men and women conduct their dark works. They are aware that it is neither demons nor the supernatural in the traditional sense that hides in the shadows. Even though they have no clear definition they serve these powers, which they call "the ancients" or "the outer ones". Disciples believe a change is coming and they wish to earn a place alongside the future rulers of the earth.

Disciples are men and women who have delved for many years in forbidden arcane lore, obsessing about finding the creatures that lurk in the darkest regions of existence. Their knowledge combined with twisted rituals and an unstable mental health twisted them into Disciples. Many of these people have found each other and have started cadres. Cadres are often unaware of each other and the existence of other Disciples, but as of late some have begun to search for others, and if they manage to organize all the Disciples in the world a new powerful, and extremely deadly, cult will be born.

Disciples look like humans, somewhat shabby and sickly though. The dark energies they have channeled into their souls have a negative influence on their appearance. They often have bad skin, glassy eyes and minor rashes. Gifted delving in magic that lose all their mentality risk becoming Disciples. If this ever happens to a character he is lost.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 4
<i>Brains:</i> 3	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 3
<i>Brawn:</i> 2	<i>Quickness:</i> 2
<i>Clout:</i> 1	<i>Reaction:</i> 2
<i>Defense:</i> 1	<i>HP:</i> 16
<i>Movement:</i> -	<i>Essence:</i> 40
<i>Attacks:</i> Ritual Dagger: 2	
<i>Skills:</i> Academics 4, Contacts 3 (cults & sects), Cryptography 2, Deprogramming 3, Focus 3, Occult 3, Rhetoric 2, Search 2	
<i>Trainings:</i> Linguistics, Meditation	

PROCLIVITIES

Summoning

Before the change they were able to use human magic but they lost a large portion of their souls. This makes it impossible for them to use their old art. In exchange they have the ability to perform a type of magic they call summoning. This type of magic is faster than human magic and uses dark energies. When they work it they speak in tongues and their voices become twisted and unnatural.

Summon Sickness

By summoning for one round they may incite a violent reaction in the body of an individual in their line of sight. They have to beat the victim in a contested test. The Disciple pits his Cool + Focus against the Brawn of the target. If the Disciple is successful the victim starts to shake, feel feverish, suffers from blurred vision and a cold pain shoots through his innards. During this time the victim also suffers severe nosebleeds and bleeding from the mouth, which drains 1D+2 bashing hit points. The afflicted suffers a -2 modifier to every action. The victim also counts his movement and meters per round as one scale lower on the tables. This lasts for 1D minutes.

Ratio: 2

Summon violence

If the Disciple beats the victim in a contested test, Cool-versus Cool, the individual becomes enraged, attacking everyone around him that is of an earthly breed (the Disciple may direct the victim to attack creatures of darkness if he wishes). The individual instantly slides up to stage five on the Fight or Flight monitor. However, he is instantly lowered to the stage he had before the summoning after the duration has ran out. This lasts for 1D rounds.

Ratio: 2

Summon the dreamer

This power is useful when they wish to get their hands on someone without resorting to violence. The summoning demands the cooperation of three Disciples. One criterion is that one of them has laid eyes on the victim prior to the summoning.

The person has to be asleep and the Disciples have to be on a distance of no more than a thousand kilometers from the victim's location. The summoning takes two hours to perform and at least one of the Disciples needs to beat the victim in a contested test, their Cool + Focus versus the victim's Cool. If successful the victim will try to get to the Disciple. The victim is somewhat distant in his behavior and talk slowly and as little as possible under the influence of this summoning. He can drive cars, book flights and will do everything in his power to get to the Disciples. However, he won't endanger himself. The duration lasts until the victim has reached his destination or until he has suffered a physical or psychological shock.

Ratio: 1

Summon the dark soul

By sacrificing the blood of an innocent they may create a dark soul, which may do their bidding. They use them as spies and assassins. At least eight Disciples need to be present and they all have to gather around a circle of summoning (made up of Death Seals). After they have killed the human sacrifice by using a sacrificial dagger they begin to chant. The ritual rips life force from the Disciples as well and it costs them 5 hit points each. At least two of them have to succeed with a Cool + Focus test with a -2 modifier. If successful, an Ocul has been created. The ritual takes two hours.

The Ocul is just a temporary one, existing for 1D+7 days, and it is bound to the circle and serves the present Disciples. It will try to complete any task it is given. They seldom use this summoning since it takes a lot out of them, and the disappearance of innocents tends to draw unwanted attention.

Ratio: 1

Summon revulsion

By beating the victim in a contested test using Cool + Focus versus the victim's Brawn, the Disciple may instill a feel of utter disgust and revulsion. The smell of rotting flesh and putridity creeps upon the victim until it is unbearable. For 2D rounds the afflicted will regurgitate uncontrollably.

They can move and try to perform actions but their meters per turn is counted as 10 and their movement is reduced to zero. They suffer a -3 modifier on all actions. It takes the Disciple one round to make this summons take effect.

Ratio: 2

Additions: There are many other ways they may use their power to summon and feel free to come up with new ones. The idea that Disciples are gathering to form a new cult can easily be used as the foundation for a story. Which faction will they serve? Maybe some will serve different masters?

FLESH DOLLS

Breed: Half-breed

Many are those who in fear of the signs of aging go under the knife in order to make themselves beautiful. Some become so fixated by it that it becomes an obsession. Time after time they alter their appearance. It doesn't matter how beautiful they are; they see a distorted and ugly version of themselves in the mirror. This obsession mostly afflicts women who have been driven to it by our modern day media and its unrealistic take on beauty. When things go too far, most good plastic surgeons refer the patient to a psychiatrist and blacklist them as surgical patients for their own safety. But there are unethical and greedy doctors who don't care as long as they can make a buck. Even if they know that continued procedures will permanently damage and disfigure the patient in the end they continue. Some are even hacks, botching the job straight up. When this happens the patient becomes disfigured forever. In the grip of desperation, obsession, and twisted trains of suicidal thoughts, they try to operate themselves. Obviously the procedure leaves them even worse off, dead in most cases. Most of the time they end up horribly cut up on their bathroom floor, dying from blood loss and trauma. When they die, and if the ambient dark energy is sufficient, their souls travel to a Gate of Grief and they transform into a Flesh Doll.

Most Flesh Dolls appear as horribly disfigured women. Their skin is a sewn together patchwork of hanging flaps. Some pieces are atrophied while others are decomposing and fleshy. Black ichors run from the seams. Their breasts are sacks of bloody skin with large sores, as if implants have been ripped out. Their faces are equally hideous with jagged and cut lips and noses that reveal the bone beneath.

They come to our world searching for young beautiful women to prey on. They flay them, making a mask or a whole suit of their skin to make themselves "beautiful". They suture or staple the flaps of skin to themselves and wear it for a week or so before it becomes too rotten. Many also seek out unethical plastic surgeons and subject them to the most vile and painful surgery. Due to their connection to the world of medicine Flesh Dolls usually search out Sites of Sickness.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 2
<i>Brains:</i> 2	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 3
<i>Brawn:</i> 4 (I)	<i>Quickness:</i> 3 (I)
<i>Clout:</i> -	<i>Reaction:</i> 3 (I)
<i>Defense:</i> 2	<i>HP:</i> 25
<i>Movement:</i> +4	<i>Essence:</i> -
<i>Attacks:</i> <i>Serrated Scalpel</i> : 3, <i>Bone Saw</i> : 4	
<i>Skills:</i> <i>Athletics</i> : 3, <i>Close Combat</i> 3, <i>Medicine (disfiguring surgery & torture)</i> : 4, <i>Search</i> : 3, <i>Stealth</i> 4	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every round.

Damage reduction: Their torn bodies aren't particularly susceptible to damage. They only sustain half of all damage inflicted upon them.

Mould: For this power to be effective the victim has to be immobilised. Flesh Dolls usually make use of this power to remove minor physical flaws (scars, acne) from their victims before they flay them or to aid in the torture of plastic surgeons. However, they can make radical alterations as well. Everything from sealing huge wounds (not healing, only hiding the damage) to bend, graft and fuse bones together can be done with the mould power.

Hidden arsenal: They hide syringes, scalpels and retractor hooks under their flaps of skin and can make use of them with a moment's notice.

Paralysing drug: The syringes they have hidden contain a potent paralytic. They use Quickness + Close Combat when injecting it in combat. The drug has a Strength of -2/1. If the victim successfully resists it, using Brawn, he will suffer a -3 modifier to all actions and his meters per turn is halved and movement reduced to zero. If he is unsuccessful he will suffer a -4 to all actions and he can only hobble. The effect of the drug lasts for ten minutes. Three or more doses within this period will render the victim totally immobilised for thirty minutes, even if he successfully resists all three injections. Flesh Dolls use this power to keep their victims in check while they operate. The person is fully conscious and experiences every cut. However, he cannot move and is only capable of uttering a silent whimper. Toxicological screening of a victim will reveal that the drug is of an unknown biological origin, which cannot seem to be pinned down or replicated.

Flay: Flesh Dolls can flay their victims very rapidly if so inclined. This power is also effective in combat. By remaining passive for one round and then directly attacking the following round (if the victim is within brawling range) they may flay off a large chunk of skin. The hands of the

Flesh Doll move in a blur as the skin is peeled off. This inflicts 1D+1 points worth of damage to the body part affected. The Flesh Doll has to pass a Quickness + Medicine test with a -3 modifier in order to be successful. A victim who is subjected to this will have to undergo severe plastic surgery and a skin transplant. The afflicted area will still be somewhat disfigured and if the face is afflicted the victim will suffer a -1 modifier to all social tests the storyteller deems affected by it. Only after a year's worth of repeated surgery can this be remedied. If two flay attacks have hit the face the scarring is permanent.

Ratio: 4

Macabre movement: They move eerily. They constantly shift their stance as they walk with weird jerks of their limbs and body. They can move at normal speed for a short while and suddenly they can lurch forward a couple of meters with incredible speed. During all this they seem to suffer some sort of severe seizure which makes them convulse violently from time to time, making them appear as a blur of activity. Beyond being freakish, this ability serves a purpose. The Flesh Doll may apply their Defense to all attacks aimed at them from a distance (shooting, throwing).

In passing: The creature cannot physically change its appearance, but it can alter the perception of others. Those who encounter them while they use this power see them but cannot truly perceive what they really are. The Flesh Doll appears as a nondescript individual and no one really pays much attention if the creature keeps a low profile. People who try to describe them afterwards can only come up with "She looked like anyone, average height, average built. Hair color? Don't know. Race? White or Latino. Maybe." If the Flesh Doll attacks, or moves too fast, their true nature becomes apparent. They seldom show up on surveillance cameras at all, but if they do they come out as a blur.

Psyche Points: 1D

Fear Score: 9

Modifier: -2



FERIIAY

Breed: Mystification

Feriiay are small flying creatures, which can be found in the Coil as well as in our world. They stand about a half-meter tall and have two short legs, long arms with small hands that end in talons and bat like-wings, some have horns as well. They have a gray skin tone and yellow eyes. Instead of a mouth they have a beak filled with razor-sharp teeth.

Not even the dark ones know what the purpose of these creatures are. Some attack humans, other attack dark ones and some attack every kind of creature. They are good at hiding and often keep to themselves. When spending time in our world they usually sit beside gargoyles and other kinds of statues; as they are cold and hard to the touch and can sit for hours they tend to go unnoticed.

They have a high-pitched screech and hiss when threatened. They often fly in a small flock and they have a tendency to become obsessed with some people, following them everywhere and sometimes they kill them in the end. Many dark ones think that they actually feed off human inspiration, as most people they become obsessed with are writers, artists and other creative individuals.

STATS

<i>Attention: 3 (M)</i>	<i>Cool: 3</i>
<i>Brains: 1</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3</i>
<i>Brawn: 3</i>	<i>Quickness: 5</i>
<i>Clout: -</i>	<i>Reaction: 4</i>
<i>Defense: 4</i>	<i>HP: 18</i>
<i>Movement: +5</i>	<i>Essence:</i>
<i>Attacks: Claws & Beaks: 3</i>	
<i>Skills: Athletics (Climbing & Flying): 4, Close Combat: 3, Search: 5, Stealth 3.</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Flight: They have wings and are capable of flight. They may fly at 60 km/h.

Claws & Beak: These sharp implements cause fatal damage.

Camouflage: They may take any shade of color and pattern they wish. When they are standing still on a roof ledge it is impossible to realize that the creature is *not* a statue. Anyone trying to detect them visually when they press against an object and take on the color and texture suffers a -2 modifier.

Inspiration: They have to be at least one hundred meters from the individual and wish for him to gain inspiration.

When this ability is active the person gains a +3 modifier to all tests involving one particular form of creative art. Most of the time the Feriiay enhances an art form that the individual frequently makes use of. Every day someone creates while under the influence of this power he loses 2 psyche points and is incapable of regaining them while influenced by the Feriiay. This feeds the malicious creature.

Hard skin: Their skin is hard and provides them with an amour value of 2 and immunity to critical hits, electricity, corrosives and fire.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every minute.

Dying: These creatures are dying; once they were feared. They are a product of the medieval fear people harbored towards gargoyles, but these days they have nothing to sustain them in the way of beliefs, and because the only thing keeping them in existence is the belief of man they have to rip it from humanity. Once a year they need to inspire humans and doing so they steal some of their inner selves (psyche points) to sustain themselves. Sometimes they need smaller amounts of inspiration and other times they need more. To them, there is nothing more satisfying and nourishing than the fear a human feels when he is killed by one of them, but also they need him to be inspired at the time of death.

Additions: Most Feriiay seldom kill humans when they visit our world since they (at least on some level) understand that they would be in danger in this day and age if they were ever discovered. Compared to a thousand years ago they are very few in numbers.

They need no other sustenance than inspiration and are immune to illness and poisons. They don't age and they don't need to breathe. However, they have a taste for the hunt and human flesh, something given to them at their creation when man feared them.

Psyche Points: 1D/2

Fear Score: 3

Modifier: -1



FORSAKEN

Breed: Half-breeds

Sadly the world is filled with children that suffer abuse, molestation and all kinds of horrors. Some are killed by their torturers and sometimes their souls never pass into the unknown, instead their souls are filled with dark energy. When this happens, they become Forsaken.

The Forsaken are children who have died by the hands of their torturers after years of abuse. The energy of the Coil gives them a physical form. These creatures seek revenge but their motives are twisted and they have an enormous hatred for all families, wishing death and mayhem upon them out of jealousy. Most Forsaken are unbound but some serve Ahriman or his seven brothers.

Forsaken appear as a twisted version of their former selves. They are sickly pale, often very thin and are covered by fresh burns, cuts, scars and bruises. They seldom blink and often bat off a disturbing smile. Many have bloodshot eyes and blue lips, the signs of strangulation.

They have a playful but sadistic mind and love to toy with their victims before killing them. Forsaken rely on stealth, surprise and psychological terror to subdue and control their victims, and are fearfully adept at what they do. They can stalk a family or victim for weeks or months, terrorizing them, before capturing them to give them a painful and horrible death. When they kill families they often try to force the parents to inflict the same suffering on their own children as the Forsaken felt in life. The few Forsaken that live in our world make their homes in abandoned houses and apartments. They are often drawn to theme parks, circuses and carnivals. This is some leftover memory from their former playfulness and childhood. Some hide themselves in traveling carnivals as a means to hide their killings, finding new victims in each new city. Many underestimate them as foes when they first lay eyes on them because of their size, but they are much tougher than a grown man, stronger and have the capacity to withstand grave injuries. They have a tendency to use knives and other sharp objects as these weapons are quiet and can be used to torture the victims as well. Some Forsaken hum and sing lullabies softly even when they are killing as they on some level are still connected to what they once were and now scorn.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 2	<i>Cool:</i> 2
<i>Brains:</i> 2	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 2
<i>Brawn:</i> 3 (I)	<i>Quickness:</i> 3 (I)
<i>Clout:</i> 1	<i>Reaction:</i> 4
<i>Defense:</i> 3	<i>HP:</i> 25
<i>Movement:</i> +5	<i>Essence:</i>
<i>Attacks:</i> Butcher Knife/Straight Razor: 2	
<i>Skills:</i> Athletics 2, Close Combat: 3, Search 3, Stealth 3	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Instant movement: Within a ten meter radius a Forsaken may disappear in a blink of an eye, reappearing wherever he wishes within this radius. If wishing to notice where they reappear (if possible) you have to make an Attention + Search test with a -3 modifier. This ability can only be used once per round and only on the initiative of the Forsaken.

Projection: A Forsaken may project his personal torments from his old life into the mind of another. The person lives through a short flash (lasting one round) of pain, degradation and fear. Exactly how a character reacts to this is up to the storyteller and depends on what they experience.

Ratio: 6

Traveling voice: First of all, a Forsaken may imitate any human voice he has heard and secondly he may make his voice sound as if coming from any direction. Voice throwing works within a fifty-meter radius.

Doll: A Forsaken may take on the appearance of a doll. They actually shrink, reducing their mass, and take on the guise of a rather nice-looking doll. They can blink, turn their heads and talk (sounding like a voice box, not moving their lips) in this form. They use this power, laying themselves down on a playground, lost-and-found bins, or wherever. When they are picked up and brought to a family they will begin their reign of terror. The transformation takes about ten seconds and is utterly frightening and macabre to behold.

Innocence: This isn't a physical alteration but a psychological invasion. When this power is activated all in the vicinity perceives the Forsaken as a normal child, and even if a person knows what it is he will be incapable of harming the abomination. Even a brutal child killer would be incapable of harming them since the state of mind of the affected is actually changed. This ability lasts for 1D rounds and as soon as the duration is over, or when the Forsaken commits an act which contradicts the mental illusion (stabs someone for example), the illusion shatters. They often use this when they need to escape or when they just want to mess with someone's head.

Ratio: 3

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit points every round.

Damage reduction: They aren't entirely corporal beings and only sustain a quarter of all damage done to them.

Additions: There are many ways to use Forsaken. Some are bound to a place or object while others may be vanquished as soon as their body is found or their killer is caught. These might even exist in the object, only manifesting physically during certain hours or circumstances and are killed when the object is destroyed. How frightening you perceive a Forsaken to be depends entirely on the situation and the storyteller should be the judge of this.



Psychiatrist: Fredric Cain
Patient: Eric Gerard
Department: Children's Ward
Report Filed: 09/03/07

Eric has displayed classic signs of both paranoid delusions and schizophrenia. The first month I followed the board's recommendation and prescribed milder sedatives during the integration process. However, he has failed to respond to our sessions and the medication, and has displayed even more disruptive and delusional tendencies.

Our policy is to monitor the patients for three months to assure that our first assessment of their illness is correct. In the case of Eric I have been forced to implement a much more aggressive method altogether in an earlier stage. He has become a danger to himself and others. I have started him on a 10 mg Thorazine dosage, administered four times per day. I understand that this is quite controversial as he is only ten years old, but our medical exams show that he is physically fine.

I'm now convinced that he suffers from schizophrenia or a very severe form of psychosis. Catatonia or a form of lethargy brought on by the trauma was to be expected but not this. It seems that the death of his parents triggered something in his mind. Of course, I do understand the psychological strain of watching one's parents die while trapped in the car with them, but his symptoms are unusual and the onset is just too sudden.

Eric has a hard time accepting the fact that accidents happen for no other reason than those instigated by circumstantial events. This has led to a fantasy construct in his mind. Eric is convinced that a child (creature is more appropriate) is responsible for the demise of his parents and that it stalks him even now. He claims that he found a doll some months ago in the playground. Soon after he had brought it home things started to happen. He went on telling me that a child, a dead child, hid inside the doll and started to harass him with threats of killing his parents and friends. Eric also said that it killed one of his classmates.

I wished to be thorough so I did some research. One of his classmates did die, but in a bicycle accident. I managed to obtain some of Eric's artwork from that period and it does indeed display some eerie drawings involving a doll.

In any event, this might explain the rapid and severe onset of his disorders. It seems as if he has a history of mental instability (unnoticed by both his parents and the school) and the deaths of his parents (and friend) might have pushed him over the edge. He claims that the doll/child/creature has followed him here. His violent outbursts usually occur at night when he's alone which might indicate that his problems are connected to abandonment issues as well. I will visit his school and talk to his teacher in order to get some more background. I recommend that we keep him on the medication for now and see how we might best help him. He has no next of kin so he's a ward of the state.

Note: It seems as if we have a localized electrical problem in the children's ward. If you could send someone to look at it I would appreciate it. Also, Candace Heric has begun to display signs of auditory hallucinations; apparently she claims that she has started to hear lullabies in the vent shafts. We need to do another evaluation of her.

One last thing, we really need to tighten our security. It appears that a patient (we don't know who) managed to get access to the kitchen, and a carving knife went missing. The kitchen staff didn't notice that it was missing until some hours later. This is a very serious (and extremely dangerous) problem and I immediately ordered a lock down and a cell-to-cell search.

GESOIDS

Breed: Half-breeds

Gesoids are the creation of Ahriman and they are sickening creatures indeed. Through gruesome experiments they try to define the inner essence of the human condition, attempting to find and extract the very soul. They are particular interested in individuals which display unusual abilities such as magic, psychic abilities, and extremely high intellect. Also, they tend to study those who have met extreme hardship and survived. Some Gesoids claim they actually have caught a glimpse of the soul as it fled the body upon death, but as of yet they haven't been able to preserve one for further study. They wish to find out if human evil resides in the soul of man and what makes some people capable of wielding magic and psychic abilities.

Gesoids are about two meters tall and have an extremely thin build. They lack skin and their naked and pain-free flesh oozes with ichors and coagulated blood. Their flesh is fused with all kinds of cables, steel constructs and electronic and mechanical components. Some have a twisted mouth of broken teeth but most do not. Instead they have a device of half-organic, half-mechanical nature. Their voices are cold and metallic.

From the back of their heads pulsating tubes run down and fuse with their spines', through these unmentionable substances flow and whenever they find something particularly interesting these tubes pulsate even more. Their fingers end in sharp metallic talons resembling scalpels.

Gesoids are callous and highly motivated researchers and have struggled for millennia to get their hands on a human soul. They are convinced that if they could study a pure soul out of its "casing" they would better understand mankind and find new ways to torment us.

They are of the notion that the soul might wish to leave the body if enough pain is inflicted, and so they never use any kind of anesthetics in their work. In their Constructs



in the Coil they have all kinds of gruesome devices they use for torture and to conduct experiments on humans. Oddly enough they are quite talkative and often explain at great length to their subjects exactly what they are doing to them.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 5	<i>Cool:</i> 4
<i>Brains:</i> 4(I)	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 3
<i>Brawn:</i> 3 (I)	<i>Quickness:</i> 2
<i>Clout:</i> -	<i>Reaction:</i> 3
<i>Defense:</i> 2	<i>HP:</i> 30
<i>Movement:</i> +2	<i>Essence:</i> -
<i>Attacks:</i> Scalpel Claws: 3	
<i>Skills:</i> <i>Academics:</i> 3, <i>Close Combat:</i> 3, <i>Computers:</i> 4, <i>Cryptography:</i> 3, <i>Interrogation (torture):</i> 4, <i>Medicine:</i> 4, <i>Psychology:</i> 3, <i>Science</i> 4, <i>Search</i> 3.	
<i>Trainings:</i> <i>Hacking,</i> <i>Theology</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Memory extraction: By applying a ten-centimeter-long thick needlelike instrument, sticking it in the neck of a victim and connecting a cable from it to themselves, they may extract memories. The actual needle causes a great deal of pain but only causes 1 point of fatal damage. The Gesoid has to beat the victim in a Cool + Medicine roll vs the victim's Cool. If the creature fail it cannot access the memory for another twenty-four hours. If they succeed it may extract 20% of per rolled success of the individual's memory, starting at childhood. The memory isn't erased, only copied.

A Gesoid may have memories of three individual's stored within itself, and if it wishes to preserve them it has to travel to its Construct in order to upload them to their huge memory banks.

Memory manipulation: Using the same instrument they may erase and replace memories. They may alter and erase the last 2D+10 hours of a person's life. The new memories are impossible to distinguish from the real thing and only a few people have ever regained their memories by force of will. These have been of great interest to the Gesoids.

They often plant all kinds of memories in people; they make them believe they have killed someone or sometimes they may actually murder a victim's child, partner or friend and implant that someone else close to them (or the victim himself) committed the murder. They wish to learn if the individual takes out his revenge (or commits suicide, believing he has done it). Gesoids do all kinds of cruel experiments in order to study the reactions and behavior of humans when these are put under extreme stress and psychological upheaval.

In their constructs they have even more powerful devices, which let them erase years from a human memory, replacing

them with something entirely different. In some cases they have been experimenting with one individual for years. Relocating him, giving him new gruesome memories to see how he reacts from scenario to scenario.

Neural inhibitor: When torturing people they don't want them to pass out from the pain, and so they have developed the ability to simply shut down the autonomic response, which tells the body to pass out. Their victims stay awake long after they are supposed to pass out from the pain, and their heart rate is also controlled so they won't succumb to heart failure due to the immense suffering.

Portal: They may open a gateway from their Constructs in order to travel to our world. These portals are static and are only shut down when the Gesoids wish them to shut down or when they re-enter.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every round.

Damage reduction: They are after all half-mechanical and aren't very susceptible to damage. They subtract 3 points worth of damage when injured.

Scalpel Claws: Their sharp metallic claws cause fatal damage.

Immune: They are impervious to fire as well as electricity.

Part of the machine: Whenever they wish to hide in a place where they are surrounded by machinery or electronics (between pipes, pressing against a large motor) everyone that wishes to spot them gets a -3 modifier to his test since they are able to take on the appearance of the machine in question.

Additions: They have changed appearance greatly during the years, from statue-like monstrosities to cog-driven horrors, they have taken on their current appearance using modern-day inventions. Whenever they travel here they try to hide behind coats, hats and all kinds of clothing. They usually keep to the shadows in seldom-visited places and reprogram junkies and other unfortunate people to do their bidding. Their ability to alter and erase memories is great when constructing utterly bizarre and mind-boggling stories. Characters can wake up, remembering all kinds of things, things they cannot reconcile having done. With this, the hunt for the truth begins and it will take the characters down a dark and grisly spiral of madness.

Psyche Points: 1D

Fear Score: 8

Modifier: -

GIBARACH

Breed: Half-breed

Eons ago these creatures were sporadically created from the souls of depraved and greedy humans who lived out their existence in squalor and poverty, dying from sickness or starvation. Most lived a good life, but their urges drove them to acts that made them fall from grace. Everything from drug use to sexual appetites may have been the cause, which led them to a life of exclusion and poverty in the end, losing everything as a result of their lack of control. Only under certain circumstances, as when a distortion is close by when such an individual passes away, are these creatures spawned.

After their death they came back to claim the flesh of others who dared to walk their realm, indulging the twisted gluttony which created them. From the beginning they were unbound, and some till are. Some hundred years ago the dark ones discovered them and saw their potential as minions. They hunted them down and managed to force some of them into servitude. These days most Gibarachs serve Ahriman or one of the seven kings of sin. However, some are still unbound and rule their own fiefdoms of terror and oppression in the deepest parts of the slums.

Gibarachs are driven by perverse urges and revel in the fear and suffering of others. They are drawn to decay and putridity, and can be found in the most vile and gritty back alleys of human society. These creatures are obsessed with control and often forces small groups of humans to serve and revere them through fear.

In human form they look like an obese dirty and utterly revolting homeless person. They stink of sweat and an air of rotten flesh hangs over them. Their true forms are grotesque. They become even more obese and their skin takes on a sticky grayish and half-transparent gelatinous look. Under the skin, you can see black pulsating veins and undigested organic matter. Sometimes, still living creatures can be seen writhing in pain as powerful corrosives and carnivorous maggots slowly break down their flesh. Their heads are hairless and their eyes are white. Needlelike teeth in several layers make up a large portion of their unnaturally wide mouths from which half-digested foods and stomach acids trickle. In their natural form the stench they give rise to is almost unbearable. Gibarachs are perverse and they may abuse their victims (humans, animals) all the while they are devouring portions of them. They seem to have a taste for large cutting tools, which they often use to dismember victims in intricate manners while they still live.

STATS

<i>Attention: 2</i>	<i>Cool: 2</i>
<i>Brains: 1</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3</i>
<i>Brawn: 7 (I)</i>	<i>Quickness: 1</i>
<i>Clout: 1 (-)</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense:</i>	<i>HP: 30</i>
<i>Movement: +1</i>	<i>Essence: -</i>
<i>Attacks: Bite: 3, Acidic Spew: Mild Corrosive for 2 rounds, Large Meat Cleaver: 4</i>	
<i>Skills: Search:3, Stealth:2, Streetwise: 3, Survival 4</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES:

Gelatinous: They are immune to most attacks since these go through without doing any damage. Fire, acids and electricity do damage as normal though. Parts of them can be chopped off if enough damage is inflicted in one strike. Their heads are still sensitive though, and may be damaged, but they subtract 3 points from all damage done to this area. They only take half damage from explosives. It is possible to kill them if you inflict 15 points worth of fatal damage to their head.

Stench: A vile stench of decay hangs around them in their natural form and everyone within five meters gets a -1 modifier to all action because of it. At times the stench is so fierce that those close to them have to pass a Cool test with a -2 modifier or spend one round throwing up (count them as if being dazed).

Sludge: At will they may morph their bodies into a large puddle of disgusting sludge. Only the head remains intact. In this form they may slither along walls and ceilings and may crawl wherever their heads fit.

Devour: They may try to devour a creature whole (if they are in sludge form they may only move at a third of their speed if they have an undigested creature within themselves). They may devour anything up to the size of a large grown man. In their humanoid form they open their mouths extremely wide and may swallow a creature whole. They first have to grapple the creature and then succeed with two contested tests, pitting their Brawn against the Brawn of the victim. If the Gibarach is successful in two successive tests it has managed to devour the victim. When they are in sludge form they only have to succeed with a Close Combat attack with a -3 modifier and wrap themselves around the victim if successful.

When a victim has been devoured, they lose 1D/2 fatal hit points at "ingestion" and 1D/2 fatal hit points every hour. They also lose 1D psyche points at "ingestion" and each subsequent hour since the experience is harrowing, to say the least. Others may see the victim struggle beneath the revolting flesh of the foul creature. However, if you manage to shoot or cut enough (15 hit points worth) in their stomach it is possible to get out.

Bite: Their bite causes fatal damage (big risk of infection).

Acidic spew: They may spew forth a powerful corrosive as a means of attack. This has a reach of about five meters and inflicts Mild corrosive damage for two rounds. The sludge is full of disease and if the victim fails a Brawn test with a -2 difficulty he will suffer from a severe septic shock for 1D rounds, convulsing on the ground in a helpless manner (might catch some form of severe infection or illness as well).

Ratio: 5

Human form: They may change back and forth from their human form at will, and this takes about ten seconds.

Regeneration: They heal 4 hit points every minute and needless to say, they are immune to all diseases.

Additions: These creatures often have followers (The Hidden in many cases) of crazed homeless that regard them as a form of perverse deity. They claim rundown slums as their own and don't appreciate intruders. These beings always have a vice; most of the time it is drugs or sex (or both). Many times they may venture to the outside world in search of this vice. They sometimes abduct humans they "like" (they are often quite beautiful) and have their way with them, after which they drug them to the brink of a massive overdose and devour them. They can actually taste the appearance of someone, and this in combination with a high is the ultimate experience for them. As their bodies are of a very alien nature, they cannot absorb drugs in a normal way. The creature has to devour a living and drugged human in order to filter out the substance.

(In their natural form)

Psyche Points: 1D+2

Fear Score: 8

Modifier: -2

GIBARACH



The cops couldn't care less that my sister is gone. Missing persons report my ass! They won't lift a finger. So I've started to look for her myself. Some weeks prior to her disappearance Laura told me that she'd started to hear and see strange things in the alley behind her apartment building. I was so goddamn mean to her. I said that she just had to stick with her meds; she'd been off them for a while. I just thought it was another one of her episodes. But then she was gone.

I've moved into her old apartment, and let me tell you, it's a real shithole. It's me, and the junkies. Squatters have occupied most of the apartments on the south side of the building. I've installed some heavy deadbolts. But the squatters ain't what's worrying me. The apartment overlooks the alley and just looking at it gives me the creeps. The fire escape connecting it directly to my window isn't exactly helping.

Laura wasn't lying, there's some weird fucking shit going on here. I heard the noises she spoke of several times. At night, you can hear murmurs echo down there in the darkness. The homeless that live there are probably one of the reasons, but then there's that other noise. It sounds like something, well, wrong. It's like a wet dark growl. Then there's the smell. I can sit for hours looking down at that alley with the window opened and listen. The other night I saw something move down there. I live on the forth floor and there are no lights in the alley, but I ain't lying.

There was something huge moving around down there, first it looked like your average vagrant, but then it changed. Then the smell hit me. It was like sticking your head down a barrel of rotten flesh on a warm summer day, it knocked me right back and I threw up all over the floor. I heard the ladder rattle and I closed the window and hid in the closet. I didn't hear anything after that, but I knew that something had climbed up and stared right into the apartment. I slept in the closet that night.

I'm sure that this fucked up thing has something to do with my sister's disappearance. I pawned my record collection and bought a revolver. Soon I'm going down there. If she's still alive I'll find her. You can say a lot about my sister but she wouldn't just leave without saying a word. I sent this letter as a warning, if I disappear, don't come looking for me. I wouldn't want you to end up missing.

*Your friend,
Melinda*

GOLNAGOTH

Breed: Half-breed/Full blood

Upon the arrival of the dark ones some were lost. Even the dark ones are unsure if these powerful beings are half-breeds or full bloods. If they are full bloods they seem to have forgotten their origin. Some serve one of the two factions but some are unbound, believing they are dark gods of old. They first appeared during the time of ancient Sumer when summoned by evil priests. Their bodies were given form by dark and mad desires and a longing for power.

They roam in forgotten caverns and the darkest corners of the Coil. They are rare, powerful and extremely destructive. They often have a vast amount of occult and secret knowledge, remembered since the days of old.

Golnagoths are huge creatures and they stand five to seven meters tall, held up by four legs. These legs are jointed and seem to be a perverse merge of rusted jagged steel and unnatural flesh, which end in nasty sharp edges. Golnagoths lack a head and have a huge mouth in the middle of their gigantic torso. Huge sharp teeth surround the mouth. Inside their gaping mouths several blackish thick tentacles can be seen whipping around. Their long arms, like the legs, end in jagged, somewhat arched steel blades.

The skin of a Golnagoth has a grayish and sickly yellowish hue, and is extremely rugged with deep cracks, making it resemble a harrowing caricature of some ancient bark. These lumbering creatures may weigh as much as fourteen metric tons.



Golnagoths are extremely powerful and they know it. Their hatred for humanity cannot be described in words. This comes from the fact that humans, aided by rituals, have bound them for millennia. Whenever they are set loose upon our world they destroy and kill for the sake of doing so. Even our buildings and inventions seem to offend them. They tear everything apart.

In the days of old they destroyed entire civilizations, leaving only a few crumbling buildings. Nowadays Ahriman or his brothers influence most of them, which makes them more careful. Even the unbound Golnagoths understand the need to hide in this day and age.

STATS

Attention: 3 (M)	Cool:
Brains: 4 (crude but cunning)	Gut Feeling: 3
Brawn: 10 (M)	Quickness: 2 (M)
Clout: -	Reaction: 3
Defense: -3	HP: 80
Movement: +5	Essence: -
Attacks: Barbed Spiked Limbs: 5, Bite: 6, Tentacles: 4 (bashing)	
Skills: Occult 5, Search 5, Stealth 2	
Trainings:	

PROCLIVITIES

Damage reduction: They basically ignore damage since most earthly means to cause harm are insufficient. They reduce all damage done to them by 8.

Regeneration: They heal 5 hit points every round.

Barbed spikes: Their arms and legs can be used as very destructive weapons which cause fatal damage.

Bite: They have a massive mouth and a bite can cut a man clean in half.

Tentacles: Their "tongue" of many tentacles can be used to grapple and attack opponents. Each round they may perform 1D -2 tentacle attacks in addition to any other action. These limbs are considered to have a Brawn of 7 (I) and bashing damage when used to attack. They have a reach of five meters.

Pounce: Even though they have an enormous size and weight they are capable of performing a giant pounce. They may jump as high as fifteen meters and thirty meters in length. Needless to say, they cause enormous structural damage upon landing.

Smell fear: Golnagoths can smell fear and never forget how one person's fear smells once they have gotten a whiff. They can smell this fear from one kilometer away. They have to make a Attention + Search test. Every success allows them to track for one hundred meters. They keep this up until they have found their pray.

Imprisoned: Most Golnagoths are bound by ancient arch glyphic rituals or bound to the will of a Vaakal. Few are free but those who are hide to avoid being caught. Most Golnagoths can only enter our world if summoned by a ritual or ordered to do so by their master. When they are summoned or ordered to our world they gain access to some special abilities: *Flight of prayer*, *Alterations*, *Endow* and *Spores*. Look up these abilities under *Spawns*. A Vaakal may communicate with a Golnagoth telepathically if the creature is bound to them, and may also send dreams through the creature directly to worshippers (see *Unholy Reverends* for more information).

When called by rituals the Golnagoth usually appears in front of its worshippers by violently emerging from the earth or a large body of water.

Travel the earth: As long as the ground isn't made of solid rock they may travel through the earth in the same manner as *Spawns*, moving at 12 meters per round.

Telepathic images: They may communicate with their worshippers by mental images, as well as all people they have gotten a whiff of. Sometimes their thoughts leak out from the Coil, invading the dreams of a human who often becomes obsessed with unraveling where the horrible dreams come from. In some cases the dream leads the human to Grimoires, which have the power to summon the Golnagoth.

Magical knowledge: From memories of old they have insight into many arcane secrets. Most Golnagoths know 2D+2 rituals of human invention and 1D -2 arch glyphic rituals. They often have the knowledge of where 1D/2 arch glyphic relics are hidden and may have memories of ancient temples of worship, where even more secrets may lie in wait. They cannot use any of this information or knowledge themselves but they often give some of their information away, little by little, to worshippers, making them believe the creature is a god of infinite wisdom. They use their telepathic images to educate those chosen.

Additions: These creatures are best used by *not* using them in a way. When a creature of this power is to be the center of a story you shouldn't use it as a direct antagonist, rather it should be bound in the Coil and the story may center on the attempts of the characters to stop it from entering our world. In other cases they might have to send it back, working their way around a direct confrontation dealing with arcane riddles and worshippers. If used as a direct foe the characters are often left with one choice and that is to run (if they are capable of this since many will be psychologically drained and paralyzed). A direct confrontation will probably result in the death of the entire group, if the master of the creature doesn't have other plans for the characters that is.

Psyche Points: 2D+2

Fear Score: 13

Modifier: -4

MENDROLOTH

Breed: Half-breeds

The dark ones cannot allow humans to know they walk among them, and so, they created the Mendroloths. These are vile souls given a physical form and a human appearance. They serve as agents and watchers who cover up the truth and kill those who know too much. Only the most powerful and corrupt souls can withstand the transformation and their creation drains a large amount of dark energy, which means that they are quite rare.

The Mendroloths who serve the Harbingers serve directly under their frontrunners, the Vaakals. Ahriman has also unlocked the secret of the creation of these beings and he has a couple of them serving directly under him.

With due diligence they watch humanity, mapping those who repeatedly get involved in the plans of their masters, awaiting orders. Mendroloths *have* to succeed and are highly motivated to do so as their masters will rid them of their physical forms, and send them to their personal hells in the Coil if they fail too many times. They are extremely devoted.

But the very thing that makes them suited for the position also makes them somewhat unpredictable and untrustworthy. They are independent beings and are by no means mentally linked to their masters. As they often have spent a lot of time in torment they wish to make their stay in our world as pleasant as possible. This makes them crave luxury. They often scheme and try to accumulate as much wealth as possible through the world of crime. Of course they keep this hidden from their masters, but Ahriman and his brothers know of this weakness in their creations, and also understand that they have a very competitive nature. In order to keep them on their toes they often pit them against each other. They tend to tread more lightly when their peers are watching them. But this has led to a backstabbing state of mind among them. They often try to one-up each other in order to be the favored one in the eyes of their masters. On rare occasions they have set each other up, a dangerous game to play indeed under the watchful eyes of their unforgiving masters.

These beings hate humans as humans live a life of freedom, something a Mendroloth is deprived of. They often subject their victims to gruesome torture out of pure spite and revel in the pain of others.

Mendroloths often take on the guise of cryptic government agents or intimidating and obscure enforcers to gain respect and to fit in as the watchers they are. They are always looking for ways to free themselves from their slavery, without the knowledge of their masters of course.

In their natural form they represent their torments and vary in appearance depending on which realm they come

from. One created from a soul trapped in a hellhole will display burnt flesh, hooked chains holding its intestines in place and similar horrific features. Those from one of the seven kingdoms of sin will resemble the Harbinger they serve in some manner, showing off revolting physical visages of mind shattering horror.

STATS

<i>Attention: 4</i>	<i>Cool: 4</i>
<i>Brains: 3</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3</i>
<i>Brawn: 5 (E)</i>	<i>Quickness: 3 (I)</i>
<i>Clout: - (5)</i>	<i>Reaction: 3 (E)</i>
<i>Defense: 2</i>	<i>HP: 35</i>
<i>Movement: +3</i>	<i>Essence: -</i>
<i>Attacks: As by weapon.</i>	
<i>Skills: Close Combat 3, Computer 3, Interrogation (torture) 3, Law 2, Search 4, Security 2, Streetwise 2</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

True form: They can change to their true form and back whenever they wish.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every round.

Damage reduction: Mendroloths have otherworldly bodies that simply are resilient to physical damage. They subtract 5 from all damage when injured.

Voice imitation: They may imitate any voice they have ever heard.

Realm of torment: Mendroloths always carry a small part of their personal place of torment with them and are linked to it. They may conjure forth these horrible realms, reshaping a small part of our world for a while. No more than about two hundred square meters may be warped in this way.

Walls crumble, ceilings bleed, obscene torture devices spring out of the ground and fires erupt. Lesser dark ones, such as Wossals, Forsaken and Gibarachs, may be bound to these places and these are the future tormentors of the Mendroloth, but when Mendroloths summon forth their torments into our plane they may command these beings to do their biddings. These lesser dark ones may not leave the area affected by this power.

Mendroloths often torture these creatures themselves as vengeance for the torment they are destined to inflict upon the Mendroloth; they dare not kill them because of their masters. Mendroloths often use the realm of torment to make humans they capture suffer in order to put *them* through hell. This is one of the most bizarre powers known among the dark ones and it is of great interest to many. It seems that this isn't a form of distortion or a gateway to the Coil; somehow Mendroloths are capable of actually

transporting this small piece of the Coil to our plane. This power ends when the Mendroloth wishes, or if it leaves the area.

Additions: Mendroloths are very human in some ways, they are petty, vengeful and of a "tit-for-tat" mindset. They have a hard time letting things go and if a human crosses them the creature can become quite obsessed with the thought of vengeance, stalking the one responsible for months, taking away everything he loves and cares about before finally killing him, using the vilest torture.

(Their true forms)

Psyche Points: 1D+4

Fear Score: 10

Modifier: -3

NETHRALL

Breed: Half-breeds

Nethralls rely on shadow and physical darkness and they are a part of it as well. Most Nethralls are unbound and they seem to be formed of anxiety, fear and madness. They often start out as a stain of evil that manages to accumulate enough power to create a physical form. They feed on fear, sorrow and the sanity of humans; without this nourishment they will dissolve into nothingness. They often haunt houses, which have suffered a great tragedy, feeding on the distraught residents.

Nethralls are half physical and half shadow and as such they can only affect the physical world to a certain extent. Neither can they in turn be much affected by it to any greater extent. Even though they are capable of limited physical prowess they usually use other means to ward off foes.

Nethralls in their pure form look like bizarre hooded and cloaked figures. They are draped in an ever-changing darkness, which seems to wave slowly as cloth would in water. Their faces are seldom seen but resemble dried-up otherworldly skulls with empty eye sockets. Nethralls often change their appearance somewhat in a ghastly manner. If a Nethrall so wishes it can stretch, filling a room with swatting tendrils of darkness.

During daylight hours they hide in the walls, under the floorboards, in cellars and attics to avoid the light. At night they come out to feed on nightmares and instill even more angst into victims. They rely on cunning and subtle ways to survive but may at times become extremely territorial if someone tries to invade their haunting. They don't possess any physical aptitudes except hit points.

STATS

<i>Attention: 5 (I)</i>	<i>Cool: 6 (I)</i>
<i>Brains: 2</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 4</i>
<i>Brawn: -</i>	<i>Quickness: -</i>
<i>Clout: -</i>	<i>Reaction: 3</i>
<i>Defense: -</i>	<i>HP: 30</i>
<i>Movement: +5</i>	<i>Essence: 35</i>
<i>Attacks: Shadow Claws: 4</i>	
<i>Skills: Search 4, Stealth 5</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Incorporeal: They don't have much physical substance and touching them feels as if touching a thick wad of cold cobweb. This means that they cannot lift objects, open doors or similar things, but they only sustain a quarter of all damage inflicted upon them.

Slither: They may reshape themselves in an instant, becoming as a wide thin patch of darkness. In this form they may slither through keyholes, under doors and between floorboards or drip and trickle like liquid.

Born of shadow: If a wall or any other surface is covered in deep darkness they may pass into it (not into living creatures though). If there is darkness on the other side they may pass through the object entirely. They often use this ability to go inside a wall, moving inside the wall itself.

Gloom keep: As long as they are surrounded by shadow or gloom they regain 2 hit points each round.

Solidity: They may affect the world in a limited fashion. When activating this ability they are able to manipulate their surroundings as if they were physical beings for a short period (1D+2 rounds). Nethralls are considered to have a physical Brawn equal to their Cool. They attack using shadow claws, solid shards of darkness, which cause fatal damage. They make a pure Attention roll when attacking.

Ratio: 5-30 depending on the power of the creature.

Flight: Nethralls fly to get where they are going. It is almost impossible to hear them when they use stealth.

Drain: The victim has to be in a state of sorrow, mental illness or depression for the Nethrall to feed of them. Great loss, a mental disorder or an Uptight mentality or less is necessary. When the individual is sleeping the Nethrall floats over him, feeding on his sanity. The victim loses 1D+2 psyche points each week the Nethrall feeds upon him, also he suffers terrible nightmares.

Veils of sleep: Those spending time in a house haunted by a Nethrall feel tired and need to sleep more. This sets in after six hours of being in the house (though a sort of fatigue sets in almost immediately). If not using alarm

clocks a person has no trouble sleeping for fifteen hours or more and has a hard time waking up if sleeping in the house.

Waking nightmare: Nethralls may project all kinds of terrible images into the mind of a person, overlapping them with reality. For a split second you can see a mutilated corpse lying in the bathtub, or find your food riddled with maggots. These split-second images are concoctions of the Nethrall, sent to make the victim even more distraught and weak of will. The storyteller has to decide what such mental stress does to a character.

Ratio: 5-30

Ghastly aspects: Nethralls may take on the appearance of people who have died within the walls of the place they haunt. They may also take on the visage of others that have passed away as long as the individual was important to the ones they haunt. These imitations produce pale, sickly-looking and frightening versions of the dead person. The creature is usually only capable of imitating portions of the dead, resulting in a ghastly upper body connected to an elongated lower body of shifting incorporeal darkness pouring out from a nearby shadow. They are incapable of speech and only make hissing, raspy and murmuring sounds, which are quite unnerving.

Photosensitive: They flee instantly when strong light hits them. Really powerful lights cause them 1D/4 damage (which they cannot reduce) each round of exposure. Direct sunlight inflicts 1D+1 damage each round. If struck by a bright light directly they might become disoriented, retreating for a couple of rounds or minutes. Damage caused by lights are healed slowly, 1 point each hour. They take half damage from fire and incendiary rounds.

Additions: They need to feed at least once every two months; if not they dissolve to nothingness. Some Nethralls like the "taste" of certain types of fear and may stalk, terrorize and kill loved ones of their intended target just to "ripen" the target's fear and sorrow. They can see perfectly well in absolute darkness.

Psyche Points: 1D -2

Fear Score: 6

Modifier: -1

OCUL

Breed: Half-breed

Ocals are incorporeal beings that stalk our world unseen in their relentless pursuit to torment the living. They are lost and confused souls, fouled by dark energies, belonging to those who have died a violent and unjust death. In stories, movies and legends they are commonly known as ghosts. Only a few are turned into Ocals, most pass into the great unknown or become trapped in the Coil as they die, and only by chance, when the exact amounts of dark energies are ambient and responsive, may someone become one of these creatures after his passing.

Ocals are angry and confused; they see the world in a twisted and incomprehensible way. When they try to communicate with the living they mostly express themselves in violent ways since pain, violence, and anger is all they know. When an Ocul throws someone across the room, or shatters a window it might just try to say "Help me, set me free!" Exactly what they want varies and no Ocul is like another. Some are blatantly sadistic while others just try to pass on.

Ocals are invisible to the naked eye but they are capable of showing themselves for a very short period of time. However, the proximity of Ocals may cause temperature fluctuations and small power drains from time to time. This is caused by their inability to control their rampaging energy.

They have three forms they may appear in: The living, the dead, and the tormented. When taking on the guise of the living they appear much as they did when they were alive, although they are still somewhat transparent. The form of the dead shows them as they were at the time of their deaths. The third form, the tormented, is an extreme and twisted version of their pain. An Ocul who died as a result of being stabbed will appear partly flayed with deep cuts trickling blood and will probably have several knives, spikes and other sharp objects protruding from its torn body. A person who was dismembered after his death might have a tormented form which makes him appear brutally stitched together, wrapped in bloodstained plastic with his intestines showing. Ocals have no physical aptitudes as they lack a corporal form.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 4 (E)	<i>Cool:</i> 4 (I)
<i>Brains:</i> 2	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 2
<i>Brawn:</i> -	<i>Quickness:</i> -
<i>Clout:</i> -	<i>Reaction:</i> 3
<i>Defense:</i> 1	<i>HP:</i> -
<i>Movement:</i> +5	<i>Essence:</i> -
<i>Attacks:</i> See below.	
<i>Skills:</i> -	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Strength of rage: By focusing their energies they may manipulate the psychical world. They may grasp things as if they were holding them. They can shatter glass, lift objects or throw things around. If they attack directly (yes, a ghost can bring you down with a haymaker) they use their Attention as a skill to hit and inflict 4 in bashing damage. This control lasts for 1D rounds. When lifting things they are considered to have a Brawn varying from 3 (I) to 8 (E) depending on their power. Some might be even more powerful and able to throw cars.

Ratio: 5-30 (depending on the power of the Ocul).

The three forms: This ability is seldom activated at a conscious level on the part of the Ocul, and is most often reflexive. When they appear they are half transparent and they seem to blink in and out of existence with a stroboscopic frequency.

Eerie presence: Ocals may produce sounds, often unknowingly. These can be as faint as a whisper or as powerful as a blood-curling scream. These sounds are often connected to their torments and fears, and can range from the sound of screaming tires to whispers asking for forgiveness. They are mixed with a wide assortment of cacophony made up of the audio manifestation of memories from their former lives, and it is hard to discern any intelligible words. They often create extreme cold spots and their presence often create EMF spikes that a EMF meter can track and detect.

Incorporeal: Ocals don't possess a physical form and they may pass freely through physical objects and are impervious to physical injury.

Possession: Few Ocals may possess humans for a short period of time. If the Ocul is successful in a contested test pitting its Cool against the victim's it may possess them for 2D+3 rounds, having total control of the person. Some are capable of possessing heaps of rubble or objects. This gives them a physical form with hit points equivalent to the object's resilience. When the resilience is depleted they are forced out of the object.

Ratio: 1-10 depending on individual power.

Sensitive to magnesium: There is no clear explanation why Ocals are sensitive to burning magnesium. Modern parapsychologists believe that some "ghosts" may react negatively to this because of the wavelength of light the bright flames produce. According to these scholars the light causes a destabilization in the very energies that holds a ghost together. In close proximity of flashing, or brightly burning, magnesium Ocals tend to lose control, automatically appearing briefly using one of their forms. If they are within two meters of bright magnesium flashes or if burning magnesium is thrown straight through them,



they will flee and become disoriented for 1D minutes. In the early days of photography, magnesium was used in flashbulbs. This might explain why many older photos from the 1800s contain eerie shapes and visages. After all, this was the age when many claimed to have caught a ghost on film. It is said that a few small and obscure brands of bulbs were particularly adept at exposing them. This proclivity can go a long way when creating harrowing tales.

Sensitive to Iron and Salt: A Ocul struck with pure iron or salt (at least a table spoon full of salt or 300 grams worth of iron) will temporarily dissipate and will not be able to reform for 1D x 5 seconds. Oculs are also unable to cross thick lines of salt or enter an area encircled by salt. So if you are in a room you have to stand within a unbroken perimeter of salt and just not make a line over the threshold as ghosts can walk through walls, ceilings and floors. The most powerful of Oculs are however unaffected by these materials.

Teleport: They can teleport to people and places they are haunting if the individual is more than two hundred meters

away, but they can't teleport to or from areas encircled by salt. Many are incapable of travelling too far from the place or object they are bound to.

Bound: They don't know it but most of them are bound to a place or connected to events. This may be a house, a locket, a person or their corpse. Whatever they are bound to it is important to them and has something to do with their reason for returning. Oculs tend to stay rather close to the object that binds them. Those connected to events (the solving of a crime perhaps) roam more freely. Sometimes you need to destroy an object (often burning it), find their body or solve a crime to vanquish them. In many cases they have a notion of what binds them, and might even unwittingly give hints. But on a conscious level they often wish to stay in existence, creating the paradox of attacking the very people that are trying to help them, even if the Ocul itself is providing hints as to how to free them. This has much to do with the dark energies that lie in their core. Their souls wish to be freed, while the darkness wish to stay. They are tortured beings indeed.

Additions: Make each Ocul unique and give them more abilities if you wish. Some Oculs might have a powerful weapon they may use. Maybe they wield a phantom weapon, axe, chain or a knife that is connected to their torment, using this to inflict fatal damage when activating strength of rage. Urban legends often tell of ghosts being able to manifest physically; is there any truth to these legends? Well, they are your creatures and you should feel free to give them whatever abilities that make a story even more compelling. Oculs can be used to fill up an entire campaign as they are so varied. There are three stats showing loss of psyche points, fear and difficulty. These show how humans react when confronted by the different forms: The living, the dead and the tormented.

Psyche Points: 1/2/1D/2

Fear Score: 3/4/6

Modifier: -/-1/-2

SICKENINGS

Breed: Half-breeds

The mistreated and forsaken people who have suffered unnecessary while dying of disease have brought forth the Sickenings. All over the world people die horribly from AIDS, cancer and all kinds of other diseases. Many are left to die unattended, writhing in pain. A few don't pass into the unknown after their death but return as vengeful creatures, wishing to bring the suffering to the unaffected.

Sickenings appear as human-sized shapes, clad in sagging skin, which seems ready to peel off at any moment. They are painfully thin and their bodies are covered with bedsores and protruding epidermal needles. Their eyes are of a yellow hue and from every orifice black sludge seeps.

Often they have sparse tufts of hair on their heads, and only a wet hiss can be heard leaving their throats.

Sickenings can be found in Sites of Sickness and at times they enter our world to infect blood supplies and to spread disease. They are drawn to pestilence and epidemics, looking to aggravate the situation. Most are unbound wretches, driven by nothing else than a crude sense of vengeance.

STATS

<i>Attention: 3 (I)</i>	<i>Cool: 2</i>
<i>Brains: 1</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3 (I)</i>
<i>Brawn: 3</i>	<i>Quickness: 4</i>
<i>Clout:-</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: Spec</i>
<i>Movement:-</i>	<i>Essence:-</i>
<i>Attacks: Bites and Scratches: 3</i>	
<i>Skills: Close Combat 2, Search 3, Stealth 4</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Sense of sickness: Sickenings are blind and navigate by using their hearing and smell. They can find a sick person with ease but they get a -2 modifier when interacting with someone who is healthy as they have a harder time finding them. If a healthy person is standing completely still and quiet it is possible that the Sickening will miss them altogether. A severe case of the flue is often enough for them to "see" a foe clearly.

Immune: They are basically immune to all kinds of damage. Only through burning, corrosives, electricity or complete bodily dismemberment may they be killed. They still react to damage and might stagger and fall down. A limb that suffers 8 points of fatal damage (inflicted by an appropriate melee weapon or powerful blast) is severed, but they regenerate lost limbs within twenty-four hours. Of course, this creature cannot become affected by illness.

Infect: When they attack (with needles or by biting) the one injured risks becoming the victim of a serious disease. Cancer, HIV, ebola, syphilis and necrotizing fasciitis are some examples (even though some are not normally transmittable in this way). A Brawn test with a -2 modifier has to be passed in order to avoid it. They attacks cause fatal damage. They are only capable of a physical attack that may transmit infection in this way if they have acquired a host they twisted, or if their victim is in the Coil. They may attack and cause damage when in our world and without a host but the victim doesn't risk infection in these cases.

Possess the blood: They may enter a human host if the person is terminally ill and in the final stages. It takes some time though. Usually they crawl into bed with the one who is sick and within fifteen minutes they have entered the host by osmosis, slowly merging with him. They may

possess the body until the victim dies of his illness. During this time they have full control of the body and the person's memory. They mainly use bodies suffering from infectious diseases and use them to infect others. If they want they can twist the host and in this case the body they inhabit turns into a physical version of the creature. They cannot change back and have to choose to leave the body and take a new one if they need to appear human. If the body they are in possession of takes too much damage they are forced out and become incorporeal again and the host dies. They keep all their aptitudes when in a human host. Sometimes they become obsessed with a particularly terminally ill person, hanging around, waiting for the victim to be sick enough for them to merge with him.

Aura of disease: Whenever someone is in close proximity to a Sickening he becomes temporarily ill. Shakes, coughs, fevers, minor nosebleeds, headaches and similar symptoms usually afflict those affected. This isn't enough to have a direct detrimental impact on anyone's capacity to function, but it is quite worrying and uncomfortable. The effects last for 1D minutes after you have moved away from the creature. This sickness isn't enough for the creature to be able to see a victim as a natural disease lets them do.

Partly incorporeal: A perfectly healthy person cannot see it if the Sickening moves slowly or if the creature is standing still. When they move at normal speed they appear half transparent and all attacks (and tests made to spot them) made against them are done with a -3 modifier. People suffering from the final stages of a terminal illness can often see them quite clearly. This is also true for the insane. This is of course believed to be delusions brought on by the patient's state of mind and physical ailments. They are quite capable of moving through solid objects if they move slowly, not living beings though. This ability doesn't work if they are in possession of a body. If confronted in the coil they are considered to be fully corporal.

Cure the core: If they are subjected to potent anti-bacterial agents, especially if they are injected in a large dose, they may be destroyed on the spot. They have to possess a physical body in order to be sensitive to these kinds of attacks or be attacked while in the Coil.

Psyche Points: 1D -2

Fear Score: 8

Modifier: -2



To Nightshift Hospice Employees

It has come to my attention that the erratic and rather disruptive episodes of Mr. Cahill have increased in their intensity. This would not present a problem in and of itself, but as it seems that his behavior is affecting the other patients we have to implement measures in order to deal with it.

Mr. Cahill suffers from terminal abdominal cancer in its final stages and he is on a heavy dose of morphine, but the delusions he suffers from are very uncharacteristic. He is convinced that death itself stalks him and is present at all times. But his picture of death is highly unorthodox. Mr. Cahill claims that it comes in the form of a small and yellowish creature impaled by several needles. According to him, it sits by his bedside and waits for him to become weak enough for it to "possess" him.

Anxiety and delusions connected to it are not uncommon in the terminally ill, especially not in the case of the elderly, but our psychological exam showed him to be quite lucid, and he explained his fear of his flight of fancy in a rational and coherent fashion. What worries me is the fact that several others in the ward have begun to claim they see it as well. This might be some form of mass psychosis and I would appreciate if you all could keep an eye out. It is possible we have to employ outside resources in the form of a psychiatrist. I have taken the liberty of contacting Dr Fredric Cain at Shadow Gleam Mental Institution. If this "phenomenon" is worsened I think it would be prudent to hire him to do a consultation as he specializes in these kinds of things.

I have also begun to see the same symptoms in the AIDS ward. If it is a mass psychosis it would be peculiar but not strange as such, but what makes it strange (and hard to grasp) is the fact that the patients from the two wards never have met. Maybe these symptoms are a telltale sign of something environmental? Different fungi mold types may produce alkaloids with hallucinogenic effects and to be honest, this place needs a total overhaul. But it is still very strange that all share the same delusions and that none of us have felt any effect in this case since we spend many hours between these walls. It is better to be safe than sorry, so I have put in a request to hire a hazard environmental expert.

Well, all we can do for now is to keep our eyes peeled. I have authorized the use of Lorazepam during bedtime hours for those in Mr. Cahill's ward; this will calm them down and ease their anxiety for now. Start them up on 2 mg intravenous injections and be sure to monitor them closely for side effects (especially respiratory failure). Do not, I repeat, do not administer this to the lung cancer patients as their respiratory system is already compromised.

Sincerely,

Adam Mathers, MD

SINNER'S COMPANION

Breed: Defiled

It is said that there are more lawyers than devils in the pits of hell, and these men and women give some validity to this saying. Only during the last two hundred years have these beings begun to emerge. They act as negotiators, fixers and advisers, and can most often be found in the halls of justice where they act as defense attorneys. They get murderers, rapists and child molesters acquitted, setting them loose on the world once again.

Companions are cold hearted and greedy, most of them believe they serve denizens of hell, which have bestowed them with their power. For obvious reasons they often serve under those creatures that have taken the guise of demons.

STATS

<i>Attention: 3</i>	<i>Cool: 5 (M)</i>
<i>Brains: 4 (I)</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 4 (I)</i>
<i>Brawn: 3 (I)</i>	<i>Quickness: 2</i>
<i>Clout: 4 (M)</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 2</i>	<i>HP: 15</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence: 40</i>
<i>Attacks: As per weapon</i>	
<i>Skills: Academics: 3, Close Combat 2, Contacts 4, Fast Talk 5, Interrogation 3, Law 4, Occult 2, Red Tape 3, Rhetoric 4, Search 2, Streetwise 2</i>	
<i>Trainings: Forgery, Linguistics</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Client knowledge: All Companions have their clients sign a special contract. This is actually an occult document (the clients are unaware of this) giving the Companion license to access his client's sins. The contract is valid until the Companion chooses to terminate it or if he is fired by his client. Whenever a crime leads to an arrest the present thoughts and memories of the guilty is sent to the Companion, making them privy to all the pertinent details. Some sort of "demonic" law governs them and the ability to create contract is derived from this. They have been created and infused with powers based on human myth. It is said that some demons are able to create contracts which enable them to take the souls of humans.

Teleportation: They have the ability to teleport whenever they wish. They may travel up to one thousand kilometers using this ability. Companions can always home in on their clients and always seem to show up very conveniently to the dismay of the cops handling the case. They always appear in places where it is safe to do so in order to avoid exposure. After their arrival the air smells ionized for a moment due to the energies used to fuel this ability.

Ratio: 6

Weaken: By succeeding in a contested Cool test pitted against the victim's Cool they may temporarily drain the victim, making him feel physically exhausted. The person subjected to the drain feels sick to his stomach, dizzy and disoriented. He can only stumble about, moving at walking speed and he suffers a -4 modifier. He hears all kinds of bizarre whispers and sounds in his head. These are sounds emanating from the Coil as the Companion channel dark energies into its foe from several realms. The duration lasts for 1D rounds. Only when the person is in direct line of sight may this power be called upon.

Ratio: 5

Disturbingly calm: Companions lack a temperament and basic emotions. They never get upset, frightened or sad and react calmly and collected to every situation. If someone sticks a gun in their face they simply smile, asking if there is any possibility to negotiate. Only powerful dark ones and their masters may make them fearful. They can fool any lie detectors (or similar devices) since their pulse, eye movements, micro expressions and brain activity (and the rest of their bodily functions) have a steady and non-shifting baseline when it comes to these circumstances. It is near impossible to determine if they are lying or not.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every three hours.

Unaging: They can age about ten years outwardly if they so wish in order to keep up appearances and can revert to their original outward age whenever they want. They have to age naturally though and can't simply add years as they want. They are more or less immune to illnesses.

Additions: Some may work directly for a demon, locating suiting hosts and relics, acting as the fiend's emissary in our reality. In these cases you can give them a skill rank of 6 in occult.



SOLIDUS

Breed: Half-breed

Solidi are creatures spawned from the fears experienced in nightmares and they stalk Nether of Nightmares in search of a dreamer. They are the monsters in the closet, the horror under the bed, the creeping feeling of angst and discomfort you feel after waking up from a nightmare. Sometimes, if they manage to instill enough fear, they may follow the dreamer back to our world. They often stalk the dreamer for a lengthy period of time before ending him, feeding on his fear. In modern times, some Solidi has taken on the roles as soldiers working for one faction or another.

Solidi are rather small creatures and stand about 150 centimeters tall. They have a saggy wrinkled skin of a sickly yellow hue, filled with open sores running with thick blood and pus. Rusted jagged nails protrude here and there and they are wrapped in barbed wire, which rips the skin open at places. The top of their skulls are missing showing a desiccated mass of brain tissue and their eyes are crushed by the wires wrapped around their heads. They hiss and shriek when attacking, showing a mouth of broken teeth. They can walk on two legs but tend to crawl. Their appearance is a concoction of modern horrors, a combination of many nightmares derived from fears of horror stories and movies. They have changed appearance greatly during the course of history, taking on whatever visage appropriate for the time period.

STATS

Attention: 3	Cool: 3 (I)
Brains: 2	Gut Feeling: 2
Brawn: 4	Quickness: 4 (I)
Clout: -	Reaction: 3
Defense:	HP: 25
Movement: +4	Essence:-
Attacks: <i>Spikes & barbs:</i> 3, <i>Bites:</i> 3	
Skills: <i>Athletics</i> 4, <i>Close Combat</i> 3, <i>Search</i> 3, <i>Stealth</i> 4	
Trainings:	

PROCLIVITIES

Doorway of dreams: A Solidus has the ability to travel with a dreamer back to our world. First of all the one having the nightmare has to be dreaming of a Nether of Nightmare. The Solidus may latch on to the dreamer. If the creature succeeds in a contested Cool test pitted against the victim's Cool it may travel back with him. The Solidus hasn't a physical form yet and only exists as a concept, a feeling of angst within the victim. The affected individual is incapable of shaking off the anxiety of the dream even if he is wide-awake. This feeling gets worse and worse, and after a couple of days (1D+2 or so) the Solidus has amassed enough angst to enable itself to take on a physical form.

To be able to do this one last criterion has to be met. A reflective surface (televisions, mirror, pane of glass or body of water) large enough for the Solidus to pass through has to be present. Mirrors are gateways for these creatures, showing a backward version of reality. When they enter our world they appear in the surface, crawling out. If a person is watching a movie one of the characters on the screen may twist into the Solidus, subsequently crawling out. A Solidus may wait if it wants to, in order to enter our world unseen. Children are easier to latch on to, as they are more prone to fantasies and become scared. The Solidi gains a +2 modifier on their Cool test when they use children as gateways.

Manifest fear: A Solidus has a link to the one they used as a doorway and knows all his fears. This lets them take on the appearance of whatever the individual fears the most (an abusive parent, childhood monster or even a being portrayed in a book or movie). When they change their appearance others in the vicinity see this as well. They also have the power to show the victim images of his fear using the ability *waking nightmares* (see Nethrall).

Infest: A Solidus is capable of crawling inside a material (wall, floor, ceiling). When the Solidus uses this ability the surface of the material bobs and waves as if made of stretchable cloth, and the contours of the creature are fully visible. They may grab and attack while inside a material if they can reach their foe. To enter a surface they need to crawl into a reflective surface closely connected to it (mirror, window, flat screen) and also use these to climb out. They may force themselves out of a wall or other surface. However, this takes three rounds and causes them 1D/2 damage (damage reduction doesn't count). Whenever they crawl past a reflective surface they are fully visible but the surface remains flat. They often live inside walls using mirrors to get in and out. If you smash a mirror or other reflective surface the Solidus is presently in, it sustains 1D worth of damage and subsequently falls out (damage reduction doesn't count). It is also possible to catch one of these creatures in a mirror by removing it from the wall at the same moment it is trying to enter or exit (or when it crawls past it while in the wall). In this case it takes them about ten rounds to smash their way out and if the object is put flat on a surface they may escape through the material as normal. If the Solidus so wishes it may sink into a wall, leaving it flat by staying still. When crawling inside a surface they gain half the armor value of the material.

Dark roots: Solidi are capable of connecting a human who enterer their realm to the realm itself. The person has to be one who has wandered to their realm through his madness or through a nightmare. As Solidi mostly live in the Nether of Nightmares they want the realms they live in intact, even after the person responsible for them has passed on. When they connect a person to a realm, dark roots grow into the flesh of the victim. He is still awake but suffering. These roots suck dark inspiration from him in

order to fuel the realm. Realms often change in appearance when they take on a new source of energy like this; the horrors of the new individual are reflected in the realm. Humans caught in this way need no nourishment and may survive for decades or several centuries in some cases (becoming quite insane). When they are dying the realm starts to crumble and the Solidi are often desperate to find a new human with the capacity to sustain the Nether.

Wall walker: If they don't wish to travel inside walls or ceilings they may crawl across them.

Spikes and barbs: When the razor and barbed wire cause fatal damage to their victim. As does their bites.

Regeneration: They regain 1 hit point every round.

Damage reduction: All Solidi subtract 3 from all damage they sustain.

Additions: The storyteller should feel free to come up with his own difficulty on the Cool test when the creature takes on an appearance that is adapted after a person's fear. Most Solidi cannot survive long in our world after the dreamer they stalked has been killed, but they are capable of staying a couple of days before they have to return to a Nether of Nightmares. Some Solidi let their victim stay alive a bit longer in order to explore our world, looking for ways to satisfy their dark urges through our flesh and minds.

Psyche Points: 1D -2

Fear Score: 8

Modifier: -2



SPAWN

Breed: Half-breeds/Full bloods

These powerful and loathsome creatures are the "offspring" of Vaakals. They are often sent out in the world to act as dark gods and deities, creating cults. Spawns are about twelve meters long and their skin is jet black with a kind of oiliness to it, shifting hue to dark green in some areas. Their heavy bodies have a girth equal to the base of a massive tree, and insect-like jointed limbs protrude from their sides. Their heads are a tangled mass of whipping slithering tentacles, which surround their shapeless mouths filled with massive and sharp teeth. They emanate a gurgling yet high-pitched shriek that makes most shiver to their bones. Spawns are surprisingly fast for their size and they look like the result of an unholy union between a centipede and some horrible unknown sea creature. Their breed is somewhat unclear as they haven't traveled here from beyond but they are spawned directly from a full blood.

Spawns are the instruments of their masters and often have a mental link to them. They are seldom used these days but some remain. They usually infiltrate small backwater communities, turning the inhabitants into worshipers or otherwise enslaving them by using their ability to create spores. Spawns are often very territorial and view worshippers and those they have infected as their property. They don't take it lightly when outsiders try to disturb them. Those not in the Coil spend most of their time in deep waters or buried in the depths of the earth. Spawns are quite animalistic and of a rather crude mindset.

STATS

Attention: 3 (I)

Cool: 3 (I)

Brains: 1

Gut Feeling: 4

Brawn: 10 (E)

Quickness: 2

Clout: -

Reaction: 2

Defense: -3

HP: 70

Movement: +8

Essence: -

Attacks:

Skills: *Occult:* 4, *Search:* 3

Trainings: *Theology*

PROCLIVITIES

Endow: They are capable of endowing heightened physical aptitudes, immunity to illness and a prolonged life to humans, effectively transforming them into defiled or half-breeds. This can only be done to those who worship them. A promise of a longer lifespan has convinced many to join the ranks of worshippers. The Spawns infuse the human with dark energies they channel through themselves from the Coil. An individual who has been granted this power age from five times to ten times as slow as a human being and is virtually immune to all illness and infection.

However, the Spawn may revoke the endowment. Those of an unnaturally high age will start to age fast (about ten to five years every year) until they die if the Spawn revokes the power.

Travel the earth: If the earth isn't made of solid rock they may burrow through it at a speed of 40 meters per round.

Alterations: This is more a side effect than a power. Those endowed with a longer lifespan and immunity slowly begin to twist and change as a result of their close proximity to their dark masters, and the infusion of dark energy. The appearance of the worshippers starts to develop qualities of their master. Some gain oily thick skin, others grow tentacles and large uneven teeth and many just look plain weird and revolting. The storyteller decides their exact appearance (see Unholy Reverends).

Bite: Their massive jaws cause a massive amount of fatal damage.

Tentacles: The tentacles attached to their front may be used to cause bashing damage. They may attack two times per round when using these.

Flight of prayer: When summoned by a ritual or their worshippers they may instantly travel to the ones calling upon them. They may be deep in the earth or on the other side of the planet but they are transported within an instant. In most cases they rise out of the ground or a body of water in close proximity to those who called them.

Link: If the Spawn is willing, the Vaakal who created them may see and hear everything through them and the Vaakal may also use some of their minor abilities through the Spawn. *Flashes* and the *voice of dreams* (see Vaakal) may be used through their Spawns as a means of communicating with worshippers.

Regeneration: They regain 5 hit points every round.

Damage reduction: They are otherworldly and subtract 8 from all damage.

Spores: By extending a revolting tube, which penetrates the skin of a human or animal, they may implant a spore. They can have up to twenty spores active at any one time. However, there is no limit on how many worshippers they may implant spores in as these are more closely linked to the creature. The spore is no bigger than a pea at its insertion. After a couple of hours the victim starts to feel sick, after which he will suffer from a severe fever, lasting for 3D+3 hours. During this time the spore grows in the body. It extends, encasing the spine and working its way to the ribcage. The Spawn may try to take over the individual, and may then see and hear everything the infected does and exert some control. By beating the victim in a contested Cool versus Cool test the Spawn may have total control for 1D rounds. If the Spawn dies or decides to end the infection the spore withers. If you detect the infection,



it is possible to remove it with advanced and dangerous surgery. Strong electrical current (that might kill the individual) may also kill the spore. Spores implanted into Unholy work differently and they grow into a living organism within the infected (see Unholy Reverends).

Additions: Some Spawns have lived for hundreds of years (or thousands) in the guise of dark gods, which has led them to abandon and forget their creators. They are bound to the sway of archaic rituals, believing themselves ancient deities.

Psyche Points: 1D +1

Fear Score: 12

Modifier: -3

SPEAR OF RAGUEL

Breed: Earthly

They are human and trained by the best. They are extremely proficient. They are the cream of the crop and few military units can measure up to them. Every member has been subjected to hypnosis, mind-altering drugs, and top-of-the-line steroid injections to be all that they can be. They don't feel fear as normal humans do, a must-have in their line of work. Basically, they are weapons and to train one of them costs millions.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 4
<i>Brains:</i> 2	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 3
<i>Brawn:</i> 5	<i>Quickness:</i> 4
<i>Clout:</i> 2	<i>Reaction:</i> 4
<i>Defense:</i>	<i>HP:</i>
<i>Movement:</i>	<i>Essence:</i>
<i>Attacks:</i> As per weapon	
<i>Skills:</i> Athletics 2, Close Combat 4, First Aid 2, Focus 4, Interrogation 2, Repairs 2, Search 2, Security 2, Shooting 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2	
<i>Trainings:</i> Auto Fire, Explosives, Booby Traps, Sniping	

PROCLIVITIES

Mental blocking: The drugs and hypnosis they are given make them capable of withstanding much more pain and mental stress than any average human. They gain a +2 modifier on all Cool and Brawn tests that involve staying on their feet when exhausted or hurting. They also gain a +3 modifier to Cool tests when confronted with mental stress of any kind.

Additions: Members tend to come off as somewhat stern and humorless. Their hypnosis has made them quite emotionless and they seldom smile, and don't have much interest in the ways of socializing. Their sexual drive is next to non-existent. On those rare occasions when one of them snaps (as a result of low mentality) he suffers a severe chemical imbalance and becomes a slaves under his urges, which becomes heightened beyond normal.

TORMENTED

Breed: Half-breed

These beings can be created by pure dark energy and are usually tied to a curse or the influence of a powerful dark one, in which case they are considered mystifications. They can also be created by corrupted dead human bodies or even by the corruption of living humans. Humans and human corpses are in most cases also turned into Tormented due to the influence of a curse or powerful dark one. Some are also the result of magic or arch glyphic rituals.

Tormented are a kind of manifestation of dark corruption. They have a basic human form but their bodies are often wrapped by barbed wire that cuts into the flesh and impaled by knives and large spikes. These implements can even penetrate their skull with no ill effect. Some are partially flayed and cut open and many have eerie glowing eyes.



Tormented are generally not very fast, smart or perceptive. But they are relentlessly aggressive and extremely hard to kill. They tend to feed on the flesh of fallen enemies, though it is uncertain why since they do not seem to need the nourishment. A few have the capacity to use firearms but most use bare hands or melee weapons. They are quite strong but lack in finesse. They also have a horde mentality so when engaging them it is often best to take them out one by one and quietly if there are many of them. The severing or destruction of the medulla oblongata (the lower part of the brainstem) seems to be the safest and quickest way to take them down. Extreme bodily damage and mutilation is also a possibility. Many make the mistake of blowing most of their heads off, thinking that they are dead, only to find them getting back up moments later. Even the destruction of their weak spot is no guarantee as they can regenerate given time. Complete bodily dismemberment and burying the parts in different spots, destruction by acid or burning them to ash will ensure that they stay dead. They are somewhat sensitive to fire (but do not fear it) and if set on fire they will burn quite well, much more so than a human due to the chemical composition of their bodies. They take 1 extra point worth of damage from fire. This means that a downed Tormented that is set on fire will be burned to ash within minutes as they burn fast and thoroughly.

Tormented cannot speak or understand human languages but somehow they communicate with grunts and screams with one another. They can set up simple traps, patrols and ambushes. They feel no pain and display no other emotion than rage. They do not need nutrition and are ageless, fueled by dark energies. When they spot an enemy they usually screech in order to alert their horde and then they come barreling at their prey, ignoring gunfire and threats.

There are also Juggernaut Tormented. They have an Inhuman Brawn and they require the loss of 7 more hit points in the body to be downed, 4 more in the head and 3 more hit point loss in order to have their weak spot destroyed (see below). Juggernauts tend to be much larger, either grotesquely muscled or obese and bloated. Many of them wield custom made huge weapons such as massive axes, sledgehammers or chainsaws (a Brawn of 5 is needed to wield them). These custom made weapons do +1 extra in damage. They often understand rudimentary electronics and simple explosives and they use these skills to construct booby traps that the horde can plant.

STATS

Attention: 2	Cool: 2
Brains: 1	Gut Feeling: 1
Brawn: 5	Quickness: 1
Clout:-	Reaction: 1
Defense: 0	HP: Spec
Movement:-	Essence:-
Attacks: <i>Fitting melee weapon</i>	
Skills: <i>Close Combat 2, Repairs 2, Search 2, Stealth 2, Shooting 1</i>	
Trainings: <i>Explosives, Booby-Traps (mostly Juggernauts)</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Near Indestructible: A total of 25 hit point loss will down them but if not dismembered or burned they will rise within minutes or hours, fully restored. A 10 hit point loss to the head will down them, as above they will rise again. In order to "kill them" one has to hit the medulla oblongata and cause at least 5 points worth of damage. A powerful attack that penetrates the throat and hits it, or a less powerful attack delivered through the back of the neck will do the trick. However, it is a called shot and imposes a -3 modifier. Using a shotgun (no matter the distance) only incurs a -2 modifier if buckshot is used. If they are decapitated, and if the medulla oblongata is not destroyed, they can find their head again and reattach it. Barbed wires will crawl out their neck and hook the head into place. They can fall down and be slowed down for a while if shot in the legs or the head. And shotgun blasts to the chest will usually have them fall as well, though this is not always true for the juggernauts.

Psyche Points: 1D -2

Fear Score: 5

Modifier: -1

TRANSPLANTORS

Breed: Half-breed

From the beginning these creatures were formed from those who died horribly at the hands of drunken doctors who performed amputations during the dark ages. Those of late have been formed from the tormented souls of people who died at the hands of greedy and sadistic doctors who killed them to harvest their organs. Sometimes even such a tormentor may become a Transplanter as even death isn't enough to keep them from their sadistic ways. In some instances a crazed surgeon has found ancient dark knowledge and been able to use it to extend his life, become one of these vile beings. They reside in the Sites of Sickness and cross over to our world in order to claim victims for their sick experiments; also they need fresh organs to survive.

Transplantors mostly look as atrophied corpses, their skin is dry and one can see their bones beneath the surface. Their torso has a Y incision that is stitched together, as if they survived their own autopsy. Whenever they need new organs they take them from a living human victim, open up their own incisions and suture the organs within themselves. The victim is kept alive throughout the process, as they need the organs to be saturated with dark energies. During a month or so after the transplant the creature has a more fleshy appearance. The before dried up tissues becomes mushy and moist, as that of a rotting corpse. Some times they have eyes, at other times they haven't managed to get hold of any. In any case, they seem to be able to "see" perfectly well without them.



Most Transplantors dress like doctors, often draped in a bloodstained surgeons outfit, head cap and face mask. From their belt hangs an array of tools, everything from bone saws to scalpels and retractor hooks. They are incapable of speech but can communicate telepathically with any dark creature they have in their service (see Flesh Dolls, Carvers and Sickenings.) Transplantors are quite powerful entities and they work towards bizarre and unimaginable ends. Most have taken over several levels of a Site of Sickness, which they use as their macabre hospital wards.

STATS

<i>Attention: 4 (I)</i>	<i>Cool: 4</i>
<i>Brains: 3 (I)</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3</i>
<i>Brawn: 7 (I)</i>	<i>Quickness: 3 (I)</i>
<i>Clout:-</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: 30</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence:-</i>
<i>Attacks: Scalpel: 2, Bone Saw: 3</i>	
<i>Skills: Academics 3, Close Combat 1, Medicine 4, Occult 3, Psychology 2, Science 2, Stealth 2</i>	
<i>Trainings: Pathology</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Damage reduction: They only sustain a third of all damage done to them.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit points every round.

Organ removal: The Transplanter has to grapple the victim in order to use this power. When the victim is grappled the Transplanter has to succeed with a Quickness + Medicine test with a -3 modifier. If they succeed they may cut out an organ the following round. The organ is cut out with precision. However, there are some organs they cannot remove by using this method: the brain, the heart and the lungs are protected by bone structure and cannot be removed in this way. The creature uses a scalpel when removing organs. The afflicted immediately suffers irreparable damage and also suffers a 2 point bleed every thirty seconds. Needless to say, they will die instantly or within a very short time if they don't get help. The hands of the creature move fast as they remove the organ in a precise manner within seconds.

Perverse life: As they need the organs to be saturated with dark energy, a Transplanter has to keep a victim alive during surgery, often far longer than humanly possible. By reaching inside their own bodies they may pull forth several fleshy cables, which they connect to the victim. These cables infuse the poor soul with some of the creature's unearthly life. This life force keeps the victim alive even though he should have died. As long as the head is still connected to the body by the spine the victim will remain conscious and alive, feeling every prick of a needle. A Transplanter may remove every major organ, except the brain, while the victim is still living, circumventing death from massive trauma and blood loss.

Macabre movement: They move eerily. They constantly shift their stance as they walk with weird jerks of their limbs and body. They can move at normal speed for a short while and suddenly they can lurch forward a couple of meters with incredible speed. During all this they seem to suffer some sort of severe seizure which makes them convulse violently from time to time, making them appear as a blur of activity. Beyond being freakish, this ability serves a purpose. The Transplanter may apply their Defense to all attacks aimed at them from a distance (shooting, throwing).

In passing: The creature cannot physically change its appearance, but it can alter the perception of others. Those who encounter them while they use this power see them but cannot truly perceive what they really are. The Transplanter appears as a nondescript individual and no one really pays much attention if the creature keeps a low profile. People who try to describe them afterwards can only come up with "He looked like anyone, average height, average built. A middle aged doctor. Can't even remember his hair color" If the Transplanter attacks, or moves too fast, their true nature becomes apparent. They seldom show up on surveillance cameras at all, but if they do they come out as a blur.

Sutures and surgical staples: After successfully grappling an opponent the Transplanter may sow or staple shut a person's mouth, or fasten one part of the victim's body with another or even staple them to a nearby soft object. The actual sowing or stapling only causes 1 point of damage but if one tries to rip free 1 to 2 additional points of damage is inflicted. It takes about 30 seconds to get free without additional damage if taking it slow. It only takes one round to use this ability and the hands of the Transplanter moves with incredible speed. The Transplanter has to succeed with a Quickness + Medicine roll.

Heart of darkness: The only organ that can sustain them completely is the heart. A Transplanter needs a human heart to sustain itself and always possess one they have stolen. This has to be kept close to them in their lairs and they hide them well, kept in vats of formaldehyde. If the heart is destroyed the creature loses its ability to reduce damage and only heals one point of damage each hour. It takes them a week to find a new heart that is suitable and prepare it. If they go two weeks without one, they die. The destruction of their hearts is basically the only way one can beat them as a head on confrontation when they are in full strength is surely going to get characters killed.

Traveler: Most Sites of Sickness have gateways or distortions that are directly connected to one or several hospitals. The Transplanter can instantly travel back and forth at will and may bring four creatures with it.

Ratio: 4

Additions: These creatures often experiment with painful and weird surgery on themselves and on their victims. They are a kind of authority figures in the Sites of Sickness

and seldom work alone as they employ other creatures to aid them. Flesh Dolls, Sickenings and Carvers are the most common ones and are used as assistants, nurses and orderlies. Transplantors work in order to create new creatures and procedures and may keep a victim alive for months, keeping them in a locked hospital room in their Site of Sickness. Flesh Dolls are highly priced, as their abilities to produce paralyzing drugs and to mould flesh are quite handy. This makes it easy for the Transplanter as they don't need to waste their time with keeping the patient restrained and may leave the closing up of a patient to the Flesh Doll as it moulds the flesh together. However, sometimes the use of sutures serves the experiment and victims can be kept alive as virtual patchworks of stitches. The presence of a Carver lets them keep a victim alive without being in the vicinity as the Carver uses the deadly work of art ability. Transplanters often mix their morbid medical practices with twisted mysticism and dark arcane lore.

Psyche Points: 1D -2

Fear Score: 6

Modifier: -1

UNHOLY REVERENDS

Breed: Defiled/Half-breeds

Since the times of ancients these men and women have been around. They worship dark gods, sacrificing humans in order to be bestowed with prolonged life and magical powers. Some are defiled while others are half-breeds. The older ones who have been altered and twisted by their gods have changed into half-breeds.

They are rare in this day and age, more common in Eastern Europe than anywhere else. They live in small hidden communities. Often these places aren't even on the maps. The ones who look human run the stores, inns and gas stations to uphold the illusion of normality while those twisted hide in boarded-up houses and underground tunnels.

The Unholy are cunning and vicious and defend their way of life ferociously if forced to. They scorn Christianity and any other form of religion, as these are looked upon as futile faiths with silent gods who never answer any prayers. Missionaries that visit their communities have a tendency to end up missing.

There are three types of Unholy: Worshipper, Priest, and the feared Lama Da Sega. The latter serve as their strongest warriors and are sadistic and physically superior beasts who live to cause death and pain. Some are too bestial and are kept under lock and key, controlled by arch glyphic rituals. All Lama Da Sega are half-breeds. The name is Italian and it is unclear how it spread to the different groups but it was in the Dark Ages that this name came to be used among

them. Lama Da Sega means "The blade of a saw" or "Saw blade" and hints at the creatures' sturdy and sharp jagged blades that are merged with the lower arms.

WORSHIPPER STATS

Attention: 2

Cool: 2

Brains: 2

Gut Feeling: 2

Brawn: 4

Quickness: 3

Clout: 1

Reaction: 2

Defense:

HP: 16

Movement: 3

Essence: -

Attacks: Hunting Knife: 3, Sawed off Doubled Barreled: 6/2/1

Skills: Athletics: 1, Close Combat: 2, First Aid: 1, Occult: 1, Repairs: 2, Search: 2, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Vehicle 1

Trainings: Booby Traps

PROCLIVITIES

Regeneration: They heal 3 hit points every day. This is true for the priests as well.

Endowed: They are endowed with longevity and immunity to illness and infection. Many also have alterations. Thick skin (giving them a low armor value), claws, tentacles and deformities, such as mottled skin, blisters, hunchbacks or other similar things are common. The storyteller has to decide the specifics; all Unholy have unique characteristics.

Spores: Spores are usually implanted in all Unholy. Spores let their masters see through their eyes, but spores implanted in Unholy take on a life of their own to a certain degree. They spread throughout their entire body, as a root system of tentacles. They live in a symbiosis with the Unholy; they both depend on each other to survive. When an Unholy is killed the spore dies shortly after but before dying it tries to attack those responsible for its unavoidable demise. They burst forth in a spray of gore, either from the torso or the head. They may control the baser bodily functions of their dead host and stumble around. The creature looks like a revolting fleshy mass of whipping tentacles. They attack using the body of their hosts (only capable of performing melee or brawl attacks) or they attack using their own slithering limbs. These cause 3 in bashing damage and are considered to have a Brawn of 3 and a Close Combat when grappling and attacking. They may perform two tentacle attacks and one host attack each turn. They are only capable of moving the host's body at half speed. To kill them one has to hit the parasite itself (modifier -2), which has 10 hit points. However, the parasite will die within 2D+4 rounds either way since it cannot survive on its own.

Additions: They are usually defiled or half-breeds.

PRIESTS STATS

<i>Attention: 3</i>	<i>Cool: 4</i>
<i>Brains: 3</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3</i>
<i>Brawn: 2</i>	<i>Quickness: 2</i>
<i>Clout: 2</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence: 60</i>
<i>Attacks: Ritual Dagger: 3</i>	
<i>Skills: Academics 3, Close Combat 1, Cryptography 2, First Aid 3, Focus 2, Occult 3, Rhetoric</i>	
<i>Trainings: Linguistic, Theology</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Endowment: They usually have much less deformities and alterations than your average Unholy since all priests are defiled and not half-breeds. They do have longevity and immunity though.

Rituals: They usually have access to 1D/2 +1 rituals of human magic and 1D/2 +1 arch glyphic rituals.

Additions: A priest has to be defiled; half-breeds are incapable of using human magical systems.

LAMA DA SEGA STATS

<i>Attention: 4 (I)</i>	<i>Cool: 2</i>
<i>Brains: 1</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3 (I)</i>
<i>Brawn: 5 (I)</i>	<i>Quickness: 2</i>
<i>Clout:-</i>	<i>Reaction: 3 (I)</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: 25</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence:-</i>
<i>Attacks: Spiked Blades: 4</i>	
<i>Skills: Athletics 3, Close Combat 4, Search 3, Stealth 4, Survival (tracking): 3</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

Endowments: A ritual of initiation moulds all Lama Da Sega. Only the most violent and bestial are subjected to it. During the ritual all their former alterations wither and they take on a specific appearance. Their skin becomes coarse and takes on a reddish fleshy color; they gain an armor value of 3. Dark energies are forced into them in a staggering amount, turning them into half-breeds (if they were defiled) and their bodies grow bigger and grotesquely muscular. They lose all hair and their faces become monstrous and twisted mockeries of a human visage. They gain the ability to climb on ceilings and walls. They lose the ability to speak and become savage and animalistic. During this ritual the blades are fused to their spore parasites. Also, a cage-like construct inscribed with arch glyphs is attached to them, covering their faces. This binds them to obedience. The priests have a horn and when they sound it the Lama Da Sega immerse from their places of hiding to do their masters' bidding.

Blades: Their blades are powerful weapons and cause fatal damage. They can withdraw these into their forearms when they need to use their hands.

Regeneration: They heal much faster than other Unholy, regaining 1 hit point every minute.

Additions: Feel free to develop different religions for Unholy to make them more interesting. They usually have entire myths and legends, which they base their faith on. When it comes to spores you can do a lot with these. Through experimentation some madman might have come up with a way to keep spores alive outside a body, implanting them in individuals on their own to gain power. Maybe some type of parasite is capable of switching hosts, crawling from a dead host to another. There are many ways to use Unholy and their condition to create interesting and chilling stories. What would Major Kessler of Unit 22 do if she learned of these spores? Sick experiments will surely be on the menu.

URGELINGS

Breed: Half-breed

Urgelings are semi-incorporeal beings and they are entities spawned from people's repressed sick compulsions and urges. Some urges that never become realized may grow to be Urgelings if the ambient dark energy is strong enough. They search for other people in order to awaken their darkest passions. Urgelings are about thirty centimeters high. Their pale bodies have bizarre proportions. Their heads are rather big while their extremities are slim and long. The skin of Urgelings is stretched and twisted; it looks as if it has been attached in a hurry, not really fitting the flesh beneath. The exact appearance of Urgelings varies and takes on aspects from the urge or urges that have formed them, but all have small leering dark eyes and a mockingly perverted form of a human face.

They are the maddening hobgoblins of the mind and usually scuttle about in the Coil, waiting to sense a dark urge that hasn't been realized. If they find someone, they stay close to him, inspiring him to indulge in the darkest of passions and urges. When they have incited the act, the floodgate of the one urged has been opened and the Urgeling harvest some of his sanity and move on, leaving tragedy in their wake. They have inspired budding serial killers and abusers to heed their dark passions throughout history.

STATS

<i>Attention: 3</i>	<i>Cool: 3</i>
<i>Brains: 1</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 2</i>
<i>Brawn: 1</i>	<i>Quickness: 3</i>
<i>Clout: -</i>	<i>Reaction: 3</i>
<i>Defense: 3</i>	<i>HP: 12</i>
<i>Movement: +1</i>	<i>Essence: -</i>
<i>Attacks:</i>	
<i>Skills: Athletics 4, Stealth 5</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Urge: Every day they spend with a person carrying a dark urge they make an extended contested Cool test versus the victim's Cool. When the Urgeling has collected fifteen successes it steals 1D+6 psyche points from the victim (who suffers a slight psychotic breakdown as well). After this the victim will start to indulge in his dark passion. Someone has to have these urges from the start. The smallest grain is enough for an Urgeling to be able to use this ability. The Urgeling cannot affect the victim for several months if it loses.

Unseen: Urgelings may be seen if they wish to but otherwise they are invisible. Only those with a stressed or lower mentality can see them from time to time. The less

mentality one has, the greater the chance of seeing one is. However, they may appear in reflective surfaces from time to time. Urgelings are completely visible in the Coil though.

Semi-incorporeal: They are mostly incorporeal; if they wish to affect their physical surroundings they have to become visible. As they are incorporeal they may stay close to the one they try to urge and often hang on his back or sit on his shoulder. They may pass freely through solid objects.

Damage reduction: They are only affected by a fourth of any damage inflicted on them, but they have to be visible in order to be susceptible to damage.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every day.

Dreams: They may send dreams regarding the urges they try to instill.

Psyche Points: 2

Fear Score: 4

Modifier: -1

VAAKAL

Breed: Full blood

Only thirteen are known to exist: seven serve the seven Harbingers and three serve Ahriman. The last three are missing and none of the dark ones knows where they are. Vaakals are immensely powerful creatures and besides Ahriman they are the most potent dark ones to walk the earth.

When walking amongst humans they look like us but their natural form is a gigantic dark mass of unknown pulsating flesh. Dozens of limbs, mouths and eyes constantly shift places, grow, shrink and protrude. They are massive, with a girth of approximately two hundred square meters and are as high as a three-story building. Thousands of voices, whispers and indescribable sounds can be heard emanating from them, creating a dark unintelligible, but utterly perverse and terrifying murmur.

It is impossible to accurately describe the minds of these beings, but they serve their masters well. They are highly intelligent and their plans may involve generations. They look upon the world in a way unfathomable by humans. They usually have one or more forms in our world while they have one in the Coil, hidden away. They are deeply involved in the world of man, doing their masters' bidding.



STATS

<i>Attention: (B)</i>	Cool: (B)
<i>Brains: (B)</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: (B)</i>
<i>Brawn: (B)</i>	<i>Quickness: (B)</i>
<i>Clout: Varies</i>	<i>Reaction: (B)</i>
<i>Defense: Varies</i>	<i>HP: n/a</i>
<i>Movement: Varies</i>	<i>Essence:</i>
<i>Attacks: Varies</i>	
<i>Skills: Whatever they need</i>	
<i>Trainings: Whatever they need</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Changer: Vaakals may take on the appearance of anyone they have laid eyes on. They may “store” ten different appearances and may replace them whenever they feel like it.

Clones: A Vaakal may clone itself. They may have seven copies of themselves at any one time. Every copy is in a way a diminished version of the original. As soon as a Vakaal splits itself up (in any number) each copy has its Aptitude altered to rank 8 (E). In this state they have 70 hit points, take a quarter of all damage done to them and regenerate 5 hit points each round. The “original” isn’t really an original after the cloning since all the forms is the actual Vaakal. Destroying one doesn’t mean much but in order to be able to clone a new one the Vaakal must merge together all the others to be of full strength.

True form: A Vaakal may shift in and out from its true form at will. They may also turn parts of their human form into that of their real selves. If they wish they may extend a fleshy limb when in human form to crush a foe.

Mutating form: Their true forms constantly mutate and change due to the massive amount of dark energy given physical form.

Near Impervious: They are basically impervious to damage, only other Vaakals may harm them.

Enter the Coil: At any time they may travel to their master’s realm and back. They can send anyone they touch to a random part of the Coil at will. It is impossible to say where the victim ends up.

Flashes: A Vaakal may send flashing images to everyone in its vicinity depicting their worst nightmares.

Eye of the sinner: They know every sin of anyone they lay eyes on.

Voice of dreams: They have the ability to send whatever dreams they like to anyone they ever touched.

Spawn: They may produce spawns. When doing this the creature has to be in one form (not in several). During three days the spawn wriggles its way from the creature.

During this time the Vaakal needs to be in its natural form and cannot do anything else. Spawning takes a lot out of them and they cannot turn into human form or multiply for a couple of months after this. Besides this it drains a lot of dark energy and so they rarely create spawns these days.

Dark summons: Only the most desperate or evil prayers may be heard, and this is only on rare occasions. Vaakals can sometimes hear dark prayers made by humans in their most desperate of hour. Sometimes the Vaakal interferes, maybe by sending a minion to see if there is anything to be done or it might turn the one calling into a dark one. They seldom hear prayers and when they do they mostly ignore them, but sometimes it may serve their purpose to intervene.

Additions: How to use them...? Yeah, don’t! Vaakals are very powerful beings, basically gods. If you use them they should be the ones watching from the shadows. They can still affect characters by dreams and such and act as the puppet masters of the horror show, which has become the lives of the characters. Point being: use care when involving these creatures.

(Natural form)

Psyche Points: 4D+8

Fear Score: 15

Modifier: -5

VRISLAGRI

Breed: Half-breeds

In the old days people believed and feared the unknown. But some wished to expose the hidden world, searching for ways to enter forbidden realms to gather evidence by which they could tell of it to the rest of the world. In order to prevent this the dark ones created the Vrislagri. They were posted as guards, watching over relics and gateways to the Coil. But as time passed by, people stopped believing and the Vrislagri were no longer needed. Even their masters forgot them. But some still remain, knowing nothing else, and so they guard gateways and forgotten temples. Some have stood on watch for centuries.

Vrislagri stand about two meters tall. They have the shape of a man and walk on two legs. Their bodies are only partly covered by paled and tattered skin and their putrid flesh is visible on most parts of their bodies. Large portions are covered by a half-organic, half-metallic exoskeleton that is bolted to their flesh and underlying bones. Screws, bolts, cogs and metal wires keep it together and these things spin and shift as they move. Their mouths are forever frozen in a grim smile held in place by metal hooks attached to chains. Their eyes are empty hollows from which black ooze spills. Many are covered by fungus and other organic plant life, which has attached itself to them. Insects can sometimes be seen feasting on their flesh.

Their appearance is purposely made to look extra horrible by their creators as they are meant to fend off, and discourage, humans who venture into these dark regions. Vrislagri are created from a physical dead body which has had the exoskeleton attached to it. Into this vile abomination a tortured soul from the Coil has been implanted and imbued with even more dark energy. They are guardians and attack those who enter their territory. They have lost all linguistic abilities.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 1
<i>Brains:</i> 1	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 2
<i>Brawn:</i> 7 (I)	<i>Quickness:</i> 2
<i>Clout:</i> -	<i>Reaction:</i> 2
<i>Defense:</i> -	<i>HP:</i> 25
<i>Movement:</i> +2	<i>Essence:</i> -
<i>Attacks:</i>	
<i>Skills:</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES

Damage reduction: They subtract 3 from all damage.

Regeneration: They regain 1 hit point each round.

Exoskeleton: When they attack they cause fatal damage due to the hard metal exoskeleton.

Wires: By Making a Attention + Close Combat roll they may attack using their wires. Their wires unravel and snare the victim upon a successful test, these cause fatal damage every round as they dig deep into the flesh of the victim. The wires have a reach of five meters and they may perform two attacks (beyond normal brawl attacks) each round using this ability. To wriggle free they have to pass a Quickness + Athletics test with a -2 modifier.

Additions: They often stand perfectly still close to a wall. Sometimes they are very hard to spot, as layers of primitive plants and fungi cover them, making them look very much like the wall they are pressing against.

Psyche Points: 1D

Fear Score: 8

Modifier: -1

WOSSAL

Breed: Half-breed

The Wossals have been in the service of the dark ones since the dawn of time; they are part animal, part darkness and part man. Wossals are almost as tall as a grown man but have a much slimmer build. Their skin is gray and somewhat coarse and they have wiry muscles. Wossals usually have long gray hair shifting in black; it is of an almost silky quality. Instead of a nose there is only a skeletal empty hollow and their wide mouths are filled with jet-black sharp teeth, accompanied by a dark purple tongue that flicks in and out in a reptilian-like manner. They move with a catlike agility, sometimes on two legs and sometimes on all fours. They disembowel their trapped prey with their long sharp claws. Even though their eyes shine like feline ones when struck by light, they appear human up close. Those who meet the eyes of a Wossal get the feeling that a person is caught behind the grim exterior.

Some serve a master, others roam dark alleys and the Coil. Wossals are hunters and very brutal. They are the foot soldiers of the dark ones and are commissioned with all kinds of duties. Humans remind them of what they once were and this infuriates them to no end.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 2
<i>Brains:</i> 2	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 3
<i>Brawn:</i> 4 (I)	<i>Quickness:</i> 3 (I)
<i>Clout:</i> -	<i>Reaction:</i> 3
<i>Defense:</i> -	<i>HP:</i> 16
<i>Movement:</i> +4	<i>Essence:</i> -
<i>Attacks:</i> Claws: 3, Bite: 4	
<i>Skills:</i> Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Search 3, Stealth 3, Survival (tracking and foraging): 3	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

PROCLIVITIES:

Rough skin: They have an armor value of 2.

Regeneration: They heal 1 hit point every minute.

Claws & Teeth: They inflict fatal damage with their claws and teeth.

Additions: Most Wossals know one or two languages. They are fully capable of speech but seldom talk. Their voices are low-pitched and somewhat guttural. Mostly they hiss and make a raspy frightening growl deep down in their throats. They are as intelligent as an average human but would not dream of using anything made by humans unless ordered to do so by their masters. The very notion offends them.

Psyche Points: 2

Fear Score: 4

Modifier: -

ZEALOT

Breed: Earthly

These are the elite force of Agnus Dei. They usually work in teams of two. They are fanatically religious and often resort to self-flagellation to atone for their sins. All of them have one or two psychic abilities, which they use in their line of work. They are modern-day inquisitors who employ gruesome medieval-style torture to attain their goals. By normal human standards they are in fact utterly insane. All of them are schooled in the art of combat, theology and law enforcement style fieldwork and tactics.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 4
<i>Brains:</i> 3	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 4
<i>Brawn:</i> 3	<i>Quickness:</i> 3
<i>Clout:</i> 2	<i>Reaction:</i> 2
<i>Defense:</i>	<i>HP:</i> 15
<i>Movement:</i>	<i>Essence:</i> 70
<i>Attacks:</i> Handgun: 4, Short Sword: 4, MAC-10: 4	
<i>Skills:</i> Academics 2, Athletics 2, Close Combat 3, Contacts 3, First Aid 2, Focus 3, Interrogation 3, Investigation 2, Occult 2, Search 2, Security 2, Shooting 3, Vehicle 2	
<i>Trainings:</i> Auto Fire, Linguistics, Sniping, Theology, Psychic Abilities	

PROCLIVITIES

Psychic abilities: They have one or two psychic abilities. They may have one magnitude at level 3.

Strength of will: The blind faith of Zealots gives them a +3 modifier when withstanding mental stress and physical pain, counting daze.

UNAFFILIATED

This section of the minion chapter covers earthly animals and humans that have no involvement with sects or the darkness. It can be good to have these handy as well. Characters will interact a lot with humans of all sorts and these templates can make things easier when you need some generic run of the mill NPCs. Animals will also be included. All are of earthly breed. The storyteller may come up with mentality and weaknesses if he wishes.

AGENT

Federal agents are skillful and highly trained. They often have a lot of clout compared to local authorities and tend to step on a lot of toes when they take over investigations. They are often driven and professional.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 4	<i>Cool:</i> 3
<i>Brains:</i> 3	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 2
<i>Brawn:</i> 2	<i>Quickness:</i> 2
<i>Clout:</i> 3	<i>Reaction:</i> 3
<i>Defense:</i> 2	<i>HP:</i> 14
<i>Movement:</i> +2	<i>Essence:</i> 30
<i>Attacks:</i> 9mm handgun: 4	
<i>Skills:</i> Academics 2, Athletics 1, Close Combat 2, Contacts 2, First Aid 2, Forensics 1, Interrogation 2, Investigation 3, Psychology 2, Red Tape 1, Search 2, Security 1, Shooting, Streetwise 2, Vehicle 2	
<i>Trainings:</i> Martial Arts, Profiling or Tradecraft, Electronic Surveillance	

AVERAGE JOE

These folk make out most of the people on the street. Average job, average wife and 2.3 average children.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 2	<i>Cool:</i> 2
<i>Brains:</i> 2	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 2
<i>Brawn:</i> 2	<i>Quickness:</i> 2
<i>Clout:</i> 2	<i>Reaction:</i> 2
<i>Defense:</i> 1	<i>HP:</i> 14
<i>Movement:</i> +2	<i>Essence:</i> 30
<i>Attacks:</i> As per weapon	
<i>Skills:</i> Academics 1, Athletics 1, Close Combat 1, Fast Talk 1, Repairs 1, Search 1	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

BEAT COP

These are the cops walking the beat in blues. They differ in attitude and motivation depending on what they have been through.

STATS

<i>Attention:</i> 3	<i>Cool:</i> 2
<i>Brains:</i> 2	<i>Gut Feeling:</i> 2
<i>Brawn:</i> 3	<i>Quickness:</i> 2
<i>Clout:</i> 2	<i>Reaction:</i> 3
<i>Defense:</i>	<i>HP:</i> 15
<i>Movement:</i> +2	<i>Essence:</i> 30
<i>Attacks:</i> 9mm handgun: 4, Nightstick 2	
<i>Skills:</i> Athletics 1, Close Combat 2, Fast Talk 2, First Aid 1, Interrogation 2, Investigation 1, Red Tape 1, Repairs 1, Search 2, Shooting 2, Streetwise 2, Vehicle 2	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

CAREER CRIMINAL

Career criminals are above street thugs and petty dealers. They are good at what they do and often very manipulative and callous. If necessary they have no problems wasting a witness to stay out of jail.

STATS

<i>Attention: 2</i>	<i>Cool: 3</i>
<i>Brains: 3</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3</i>
<i>Brawn: 2</i>	<i>Quickness: 2</i>
<i>Clout: 3</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 2</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence: 30</i>
<i>Attacks: Micro Uzi: 3, Switchblade 2</i>	
<i>Skills: Close Combat 2, Contacts 4, Fast Talk 3, Law 2, Red Tape 2, Search 2, Security 2, Shooting 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 4, Vehicle 1</i>	
<i>Trainings: Auto Fire, Cut & Sling, Forgery</i>	

DETECTIVE

Either they are police detectives or private investigators. They are highly proficient when it comes to solving all kinds of crimes and are usually very good judge of character.

STATS

<i>Attention: 3</i>	<i>Cool: 2</i>
<i>Brains: 3</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 4</i>
<i>Brawn: 2</i>	<i>Quickness: 2</i>
<i>Clout: 2</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence: 30</i>
<i>Attacks: 357 Revolver: 4</i>	
<i>Skills: Academics 1, Close Combat 2, Computers 1, Fast Talk 2, Interrogation 3, Investigation 3, Psychology 1, Red Tape 2, Search 2, Security 2, Shooting 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 3, Vehicle 2</i>	
<i>Trainings: Electronic Surveillance or Forgery</i>	

OCULTIST

Some are only scholars without belief while others are believers. They are often very knowledgeable in many fields since their studies require them to know many academic works.

STATS

<i>Attention: 2</i>	<i>Cool: 4</i>
<i>Brains: 3</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 2</i>
<i>Brawn: 2</i>	<i>Quickness: 2</i>
<i>Clout: 2</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 2</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence: 70</i>
<i>Attacks:</i>	
<i>Skills: Academics 4, Contacts: 3, Deprogramming 3, Focus 3, Occult 4, Parapsychology 2, Rhetoric 2, Search 2</i>	
<i>Trainings: Rituals</i>	

PREDATORS

Dogs, wolves, bears and cougars can be a threat. The stats show smaller predators such as medium dogs, lynx and such. Add +3 to Brawn and +7 to hit points when describing larger ones such as bears, cougars and large wolves. The animals differ somewhat from one another (a bear is stronger than a cougar for example) but these stats should give an idea to work with if you wish to include animals in your story. Claws and bites cause their damage bonus in deadly damage. Animals have no human intelligence as such, but may use Gut Feeling for problem solving and such.

STATS

<i>Attention: 3</i>	<i>Cool: 3</i>
<i>Brains:-</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 4</i>
<i>Brawn: 3</i>	<i>Quickness: 4</i>
<i>Clout:-</i>	<i>Reaction: 3</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement:</i>	<i>Essence:-</i>
<i>Attacks: Bites/Claws: 3</i>	
<i>Skills: Close Combat 2, Search 3, Survival (Tracking/foraging): 4</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

SERIAL KILLER

There are many types of serial killers. The stats shown here are those of an organized killer. These types of serial killers are typically male, often have a steady job and might have a family. Many are sadists that need to degrade and torture their victim to derive pleasure from it, and they often keep trophies and follow the investigation closely through the media. They may revisit the scene of the crime to relive the moment.

They kill their victims in secluded areas and take their time. Many dump the body elsewhere to cover their tracks. They are very good at winning people's confidence and

often have a psychopathic personality. Use the information regarding serial killers in the skill chapter to create your own unique ones.

STATS

<i>Attention: 3</i>	<i>Cool: 2</i>
<i>Brains: 3</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 3</i>
<i>Brawn: 2</i>	<i>Quickness: 3</i>
<i>Clout: 3</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 2</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement: +3</i>	<i>Essence: 30</i>
<i>Attacks: As per weapon.</i>	
<i>Skills: Academics 1, Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Contacts 2, Forensics 2, Investigation 2, Law 1, Medicine 2, Psychology 2, Repairs 1 Search 2, Shooting 1, Stealth 3.</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

TWO-BIT PUNK

The hustler, tweaker, crackhead or any other small-time loser with a record goes under this description. They are second-rate human wretches who do anything to make a buck. They are very unreliable to deal with. Some are ready to kill while others only steal stereos and pick pockets. They often know a lot of things that go on in the streets.

STATS

<i>Attention: 2</i>	<i>Cool: 2</i>
<i>Brains: 2</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 2</i>
<i>Brawn: 2</i>	<i>Quickness: 3</i>
<i>Clout: 2</i>	<i>Reaction: 2</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement: +3</i>	<i>Essence: 20</i>
<i>Attacks: 32 Revolver: 3, Switchblade 2</i>	
<i>Skills: Close Combat 1, Contacts 2, Fast Talk 2, Red Tape 1, Search 2, Security 2, Shooting 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2</i>	
<i>Trainings: Cut & Sling</i>	

VIOLENT PSYCHOTIC

Spree killers and other out of control and homicidal individuals are classified as violent psychotics. They tend to be hard to deal with since they don't care if they live or die, and they are often hyped up on adrenaline and some hard drug. The stats show them at their "peak" when in a fit of violence, counting them as in a berserker rage.

STATS

<i>Attention: 4</i>	<i>Cool: 4</i>
<i>Brains: 2</i>	<i>Gut Feeling: 2</i>
<i>Brawn: 5</i>	<i>Quickness: 2</i>
<i>Clout: 2</i>	<i>Reaction: 5</i>
<i>Defense: 1</i>	<i>HP: 14</i>
<i>Movement: +2</i>	<i>Essence: 30</i>
<i>Attacks: Axe: 5</i>	
<i>Skills: Athletics 2, Close Combat 2, Search 2, Stealth 1</i>	
<i>Trainings:</i>	

FYI

Use this chapter as you see fit. Don't be afraid to come up with your own creatures or change existing ones to suit your style of gaming. Remember that even lesser dark ones can be extremely dangerous for a group of players so use them with care. A Vrislagri alone is capable of wreaking havoc, killing an entire group of characters, and this creature isn't all that powerful. So why include creatures that characters cannot handle head on? Well, in a horror game you should always give the characters a run for their money so to speak. They should be scared as hell. You can always create ways around creatures which let the players use their smarts to figure out ways to get where they need to go. Most half-breeds and all full bloods are basically impervious to poisons but what if a gifted funneled his power into a potent alchemical brew centuries ago? Finding this could help bring down a creature.

There are many concepts you can use to create solutions by which characters can defeat a powerful minion. The factions are at war and sometimes the only way is to lure a creature into the hands of a more powerful one from another faction. A deadly road to travel since the characters will work in the dark somewhat, not having the slightest notion of the loyalties at work in the world of darkness. But characters in a horror story are never meant to be safe in the first place.

Never reduce the game to an endless sea of monstrosities. Running around vanquishing creepers and crawlers tends to get tedious in the long run. The dark minions are best used with moderation and good timing. Never feel that you constantly have to introduce a new monstrosity in every story. One creature alone can be the center of a whole chronicle.

CHAPTER 16

THE GIFTED

From the journal of Olivia Lake

I don't remember how I got away or how I ended up in a forest clearing, but I came to when Silak slapped me. He yelled for me to stay inside the circle. I felt utterly disoriented; it seemed that large chunks of my memory had been ripped away. He shoved a chalice into my hands and told me to hold it steady. Mist swirled around us outside the circle.

Silak held a staff of some sort covered with runes or glyphs and he chanted in what sounded like Latin. As he did shapes began to form in the mist. Here and there gleaming eyes penetrated the gloom. As he continued to frantically chant the water in the chalice turned blood red and began to boil, but there was no heat. And then he appeared, one of the DEA agents. He came from nowhere and he stared at us with blank white eyes, enraged.

My gut reaction was to run but then Silak spoke to it. Commanded it, offered a sacrifice for its service. And the thing that only wore the skin of a man bowed its head, reluctantly. We had a chance, a way to force our will upon the world. We might be able to fight back and survive. But nothing is certain. Once you see the darkness it sees you. It takes hold of you and will never let you go. It's inside all of us...



Humans are incredible creatures with immense powers locked away in their subconscious and their genetic code. Human magic is an ancient practice, which has been practiced for millennia while psychic abilities only have been around for a thousand years or so. Those with the power to use psychic abilities or the aptitude to use rituals are simply called the gifted.

Humans have one thing the dark ones lack and that is a soul. The dark ones try to quantify the soul. It appears that it is some kind of metaphysical and esoteric force at work but they are confused. The soul is needed when both magic and psychic abilities are used but what they don't understand is how psychic ability may be inherited from a parent to a child. They ponder, how can a quality of the soul be linked to the biological aspects and genetics? This, no one knows. But it seems as if psychic abilities are increasing. Some dark ones speculate that this is some kind of response to their presence, a type of defensive mechanism in the human genome. Magic may be honed; through symbols and faith a person may gain the knowledge to affect the world, but to be able to use psychic abilities you have to be born with them (or have the genes activated somehow).

Human magic differs greatly from that of arch-glyphic magic. First of all it is much more time-consuming at times and the one performing it needs to have a magical belief and talent. Non-believers cannot generate magical powers using rituals of human magic. Arch glyphs force the powers of the world to bend and so they take a lot out of their practitioners, feeding off their mentality as well as their inner essence. Magic of human invention works differently, carefully shaping energies to get results and therefore only essence is drained when rituals are performed. Of course, things may go wrong from time to time.

THE BASICS

When trying to control these powers there is always some risks involved. A gifted character can always choose to succeed with using a power by pushing himself to do so. But there is a mental and physical price to pay for such an endeavor. Essence is used to fuel powers and shields the gifted from harmful effects. And the more powerful an effect a gifted wish to produce, the more essence it takes. When a gifted fail to channel the powers the essence is still burnt as a way to protect him, but he can choose to use the power anyway, but doing so means that he has to channel the powers through his flesh and mind, taking mental and physical damage in the process.

When using a power the gifted makes a Cool + Focus roll. The more powerful effects a gifted wants to produce the more successes are needed and circumstances may impose a negative or a positive modifier. If the roll is fully successful and generates the needed number of successes the essence is spent and the desired effect is produced. If the number of successes are not achieved, or if the roll fails

all together the essence is still spent. But the player can choose to spend a number of psyche and health points in order to "buy" the additional successes needed. This has to be done directly after the failed roll and it will ensure that the effect is produced. Each success is bought at a cost of 2 psyche points and 1 fatal hit point. Buying success this way often causes nose bleeds, skin burns or burst blood vessels in the eyes. It is also quite painful.

***Example:** Dale, a clairvoyant, is trying to use remote viewing. The player pays the essence cost for the power and makes his Cool + Focus roll. He manages to get one success, but the power requires three successes. This means that he is two successes short. Dale really needs the information as he is trying to find his wife. She has been taken by a monstrous killer. The player decides that his character will push his own limits and buys the remaining successes. This costs him 2 fatal hit points and 4 psyche points. The storyteller describes how Dale suffers a severe headache and a gushing nosebleed and his mentality is also weakened. But he sees flashes of his wife and picks up clues to her location.*

ASPECT CARDS

Each card represents a metaphysical aspect of the gifted one's mind. As a ritual is conducted or a psychic ability is used (successfully or not) one of the seven aspects enters the mind of the gifted. These aspects are hidden subconscious desires, fears and mental blockings which no one has any control over. When the power is used the storyteller makes a hidden roll using 2Ds; if the result is 16 the aspect is activated. If an aspect is activated a card is randomly selected (make a print out and draw, number the cards and roll a dice, etc) and only the storyteller is privy to which card it is. The aspect actually forms a kind of entity, which is a representation of the gifted one's mental aspect. This causes the gifted to lose control somewhat over his abilities and the results can be quite dangerous. The seven aspect cards are made up of the following aspects: *The Lost Child, The Vanquished Spirit, The Angry Man, The Chained Freak, The Scorned Witch, The Tormented Soul, The Dark Path.*

When activated, these aspects try to have their way by any means necessary and they actually affect how the character behaves to some extent (except the dark path); this means that the role-play changes to a certain degree. If an aspect is activated on a successful use of the power the imminent ability or ritual is still put in effect. Few gifted use their abilities to show off or when it isn't necessary. First of all it costs them greatly and secondly they always risk being at the mercy of an aspect, which is highly detrimental. Below each aspect and how it affects the character is described.

***Example:** As Dale activates his power the storyteller rolls 2 hidden D8s. The result ends up 16. This means that an aspect has been activated. The storyteller lays out an array of the cards on the table and the player randomly points at one. The storyteller draws it, the result only known to him. The Angry Man has been activated. The player knows that an aspect is in effect but he doesn't know which one yet.*

THE LOST CHILD

Gifted always fear their abilities to some degree, as none of them understands the powers at work completely. They are afraid to a certain extent, and sometimes many have wished they had never begun to study rituals or hate the fact that they were born with psychic abilities. The lost child embodies these subconscious fears and wishes.

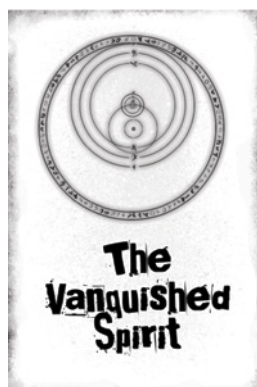
When the lost child emerges the gifted loses all his abilities for twenty four hours. The character becomes scared of his powers and really doesn't want to talk about them. He becomes somewhat withdrawn for the duration of the aspect.



THE VANQUISHED SPIRIT

Losing control over the powers within is always dangerous and all gifted know this. The aspect of the vanquished spirit represents that hidden fear and causes gifted to lose control over the flow of essence. Basically, the gifted put themselves into an uncontrollable state. In their subconscious they become unstable, channeling far more essence than needed.

The essence cost of all (including the one used at the time) powers is tripled. This lasts for thirty-six hours. The gifted becomes fatigued and tired, lacking any motivation. They have a tendency to nod off if given a chance and may become highly agitated if they are asked to use their powers since it takes the wind out of them.

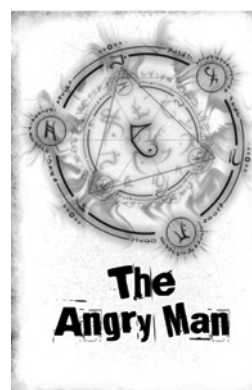


THE ANGRY MAN

The gifted always hide their abilities, may it be magical or psychic ones. Most of society doesn't believe, but if they did they would show fear. The angry man is an aspect which stems from repressed anger. Having to hide your true nature all life, or being born with a psychic ability you scorn, can be a living hell.

The gifted actively uses his powers to hurt others. A telepath may randomly read minds, finding out someone's secrets, and goes on to tell the wrong people about it. Kinetics use their powers to cause harm to others and those with psychometry find out damaging or embarrassing information about people, which they use to get at them.

The character becomes petty, highly irritable and outright aggressive at times. The aspect of the angry man seeps through every part of his being, and he actively uses his powers to hurt people continuously, often those close to him. The actions taken under the influence of this aspect often leads to dire consequences. The angry man has sway over the character for thirty-six hours. The gifted is overcome with remorse afterwards.

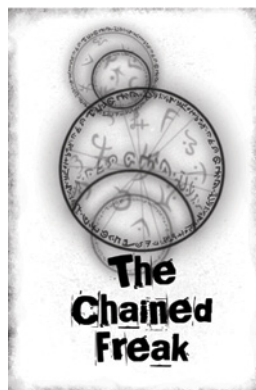


THE CHAINED FREAK

In all gifted (as in all humans) there is a mischievous streak that slumbers. The chained freak represents a cunning and destructively playful aspect of the gifted. This part of their subconscious scorns them for keeping a tight lid on their powers, wishing them to use them in order to have fun and cause mischief just for the hell of it.

The chained freak punishes the gifted for their lack of playfulness; it haunts them and creates the most unfortunate "accidents". Chairs break, windows shatter, the brakes go out and small house fires erupt. All this is focused on the gifted and the chained freak stays with him for twenty-four hours.

While influenced and harassed by this aspect the gifted becomes slightly confused and has a hard time concentrating. This isn't just as a result of the harassment; they actually start to question if they take their powers too seriously. Some might use their powers to create embarrassing situations for others as a "practical joke" in order to "loosen up".



THE SCORNFUL WITCH

Gifted use their powers with care, so as not risk exposure. The scornful witch is the part of their inner selves that longs to use powers in abundance whenever comfortable. She hates the mundane world, taking every opportunity to use powers, sometimes just for the sake of using them. A character under the sway of this aspect uses his abilities often, risking exposure and draining himself. A telekinetic might use his power to make a book slide across the table and into his hands, or use it to open doors, while a practitioner of magic may waste essence to create a lesser circle of binding for no other reason than using magic.

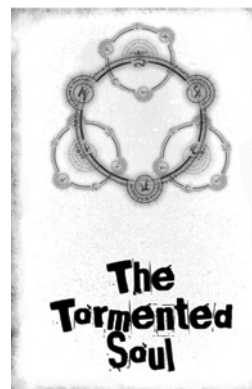
Characters become a bit obsessed with their powers, viewing mundane humans as lesser beings. They don't become aggressive about it but they clearly define themselves to be the next step in evolution or ascended beyond normality. They also become obsessed with learning more about their arts or gifts but rarely manage to do so since they are too busy using their powers in a wasteful manner. The scornful witch hangs around for forty-eight hours.



THE TORMENTED SOUL

At some point in their lives all gifted have used their powers in a way they aren't proud of. Even those who use their abilities frequently to cause harm have at one point regretted some things they have done. The tormented soul is the aspect of self-punishment and it actually causes physical harm to the gifted.

At the same moment this aspect is activated a burning pain shoots through the gifted and he instantly loses 1 fatal health point (even on a full success). The immediate pain passes but the gifted is sore, regretful and becomes wrapped up in a severe state of melancholy. When they use their powers when under the sway of the tormented soul all abilities and rituals require one additional success due to their subconscious reluctance to use them. This lasts for forty-eight hours.



THE DARK PATH

This is an aspect but it doesn't really have a personality or duration. The dark path is the aspect of the forbidden, and as all gifted are sensitive to the energies that flow through the world they are aware of the dark energy at a subconscious level. The dark path is the most dangerous of all aspects as it connects them to the Coil and the dark ones.

When this aspect is activated a lesser dark one might notice the gifted and leave the Coil in order to stalk him. Another thing that might happen is that a distortion is created, or the gifted might be directly transported to one of the realms in the Coil. The exact outcome of a stalking or a distortion is left in the hands of the storyteller (some rituals do have suggestions). It is also quite possible that dark energies are drawn into the very soul of the character, stripping him of a substantial amount of psyche points.



ASPECTS IN GENERAL

Aspects cannot pile up and it is impossible to be influenced by more than one aspect at a time. The dark path works differently as it has no sway over the character as such. So if a gifted has activated the dark path he may be subjected to another aspect immediately.

A good way to create a supernatural feel when dealing with aspects is to allow them to show themselves to the gifted when activated. They may show up as fleeting glimpses here and there, in mirrors or as flashes on a TV-screen. This doesn't freak out the character to any degree (all gifted are used to the phenomenon) but it is certainly a cool way to heighten the mood.

If you wish to enable gifted to see active aspects you shouldn't make their appearance all too fiendish. After all, these aren't real entities as such but parts of the characters' subconscious. Also, they have nothing to do with the dark ones (except the dark path). Usually the aspects take the form of someone the character knows or has seen. These persons often have an appearance or behavior that somewhat fits with the aspect. A bag lady that the character was scared of as a child might represent the scorned witch, the angry man might be someone who has beaten up the character in the past, while the tormented soul may take on the shape of a friend of the character who was killed in a car accident or by a painful illness. The characters know that these are mental projections and would not mistake them for ghosts or apparitions. If you really want to spice things up you may let them talk to the characters, urging them to do things their way. It is all about how you want to lay it out.

ESSENCE

Essence is a part of the human soul as well as the world itself. It flows everywhere and is a very strong force reaching even to the deepest regions of the Coil. Some defiled still have enough of their souls left to use essence to power rituals but they are incapable of having psychic abilities. Some demons may have the knowledge how to use psychic abilities but are only capable of doing so when they have obtained a host, using the soul of the host as a tool for this. Many demons that experience aspects for the first time actually flee as they are subjected to the slumbering subconscious of their host, getting the feeling that they themselves are being possessed.

Spent essence comes back at a rate of one essence point every three hours if the gifted gets a good night's sleep. If they don't get their sleep they only regain two points. A four-hour-long meditation session (successful meditation test is needed) lets a gifted regain eight points of essence. This is the maximum amount that may be regained during a twenty-four-hour period.

If a character has only five essence points left he feels weak and tired, suffering a -1 modifier to all actions. If essence reaches zero, he gets a -2 modifier and his movement is halved. If the gifted has zero essence left he has to pay for every success with health- and psyche points. The body actually frees cellular bioelectric energy to produce essence at this stage (that's technical terms; being more esoteric one can say that the remnants of the soul are lifting anchor). At this point the character is running hot as if having a fever, the skin seems to ripple somewhat and he may only stagger in a haze.

GIFTED & FATE

There are three ways a gifted may use his fate pool in order to gain advantages when using abilities or rituals. If an aspect is activated he may sacrifice one point from his fate pool to avoid it being activated.

Secondly, a gifted may use fate to regenerate extra essence instantly in a time of need if he is low. In this case he gains fifteen essence points in exchange for the sacrifice of one fate point (he can never have more essence than his maximum).

And thirdly, a gifted can spend a fate point to automatically succeed with the execution of a power. He still needs to spend the essence though.

PSYCHIC ABILITIES

Humans began to display psychic abilities in the 10th century. There had probably been a few before this, but at that time they grew in number and no one knows why. There are different psychic abilities and most who wield them only have one. The dark ones fear them as some let humans enter their minds and reveal the truth.

Psychic abilities are divided into *magnitudes*. These are: *Lesser*, *Substantial* and *Greater*.

A higher magnitude allows for more extravagant effects but this also means the cost of essence is greater and a higher number of successes are needed on the roll. All abilities and their magnitudes have a cost which is measured in essence. The essence cost is paid whenever the character tries to activate the ability on the selected magnitude. Psychic abilities use similar rules for initiative as normal combat and are put in effect directly upon their use. However, Cool is used instead of Reaction to measure the gifted one's initiative when psychic abilities are employed in combat. A gifted cannot do anything else while using his powers and if he is distracted (from gunfire or other similar stressful occurrences) he can suffer anything from a -1 to a -3 modifier.



CLAIRVOYANCE

Clairvoyance is the ability of remote viewing. There are different uses of this power. At lower magnitudes it can be used to see beyond psychical boundaries such as walls or doors while at higher magnitudes it is possible to see things much further away.

Clairvoyance may be used to see things through the eyes of another as well if the gifted has access to a personal object that is important to the one being viewed. It has many uses and can be a powerful tool when used correctly.

LESSER

A gifted that uses this power may see beyond physical boundaries. He may use it to screen a small house or may just use it to look inside a locked room. When used the gifted may ask one "yes or no" question. He may ask random or specific questions. If he is looking for someone or something special he may ask if the object or person is inside a house or room: "Is the dagger of Dombalik inside the house?" would be a valid question, as would: "Are there any armed persons in the room?"

It is quite possible to screen a person using questions like: "Is he wearing a wire?" It is only possible to see physical things; the gifted won't get any information regarding an individual's state of mind.

Cost: 5
Successes: 1

SUBSTANTIAL

By touching a personal object (something of relevance to the individual you wish to scry, or something he frequently uses) the gifted may get an impression from the person. Emotions cannot be screened in any way but all the senses of the one viewed may be used to obtain information. This works even if the individual is unconscious since the gifted still may channel his sense of smell, hearing, taste or touch. The gifted may ask one "yes or no" question to obtain information.

Cost: 10
Successes: 2

GREATER

Clairvoyance of the greater magnitude is a powerful tool indeed as it is a more powerful version of the lesser and substantial magnitudes. This power can be used in two ways. As with lesser a physical place in the direct line of sight may be screened but besides one "yes or no" question the gifted may get up to 1D+1 impressions. These may be random visions from within the location or bits of emotional ambiance emanating from individuals inside. The storyteller decides exactly what is learned.

The second way to use this power is by remote viewing as with the substantial magnitude. Besides one "yes or no" question the gifted gets 1D+1 additional random impressions, which may prove helpful, and some of these may be emotions coming from the individual that is being screened. Remember, extra information (if pertinent) should always be helpful to the gifted since the player spends a lot of extra essence to use this gift.

Cost: 15
Successes: 3

KINETICS

Kinetics is a powerful and destructive psychic ability, which lets the gifted rapidly destroy the structure of materials. Only non-living materials may be affected. Wood, plastic, stone, metal and dead flesh may be destroyed. There are different ways to use this power. At lower magnitudes only materials of simple molecular structures of a low density may be broken down slowly. On higher magnitudes multiple materials may be broken down extremely rapidly, basically made to explode (or implode). This power can be used to create awesome displays of destruction and is a very effective weapon. The power has a range of one hundred meters and the gifted has to be able to see the material by natural means (psychic abilities included).

LESSER

Materials of low density and fairly simple molecular structure may be broken down slowly. Materials such as wood, cloth, sheetrock and simple plastic may be affected. The weight of the material may not exceed ten kilos but it is possible to affect a part of a material. For example, it would be possible to create a gaping hole in a wooden wall. The material starts to fall apart when the power is activated and is reduced to rubble within 1D/2 turns.

Cost: 7

Successes: 2

SUBSTANTIAL

At this magnitude all materials can be affected and the material may weigh as much as one hundred kilos. The breakdown is still slow and only one material at a time may be affected. It would be possible to break down a concrete wall but the steel reinforced beams within would be unaffected, and would have to be broken down separately if you wish to destroy them as well. It takes 1D/2 turns for a material to break down.

Base cost: 12

Successes: 3

GREATER

This magnitude is very powerful and may destroy all sorts of material rapidly. The weight and size of an object that may be affected is the equivalent of a town car. If an object is constructed of several materials the gifted may destroy all of them at the same time as one unit. It would be possible to obliterate a whole car, or just strip it from its metal frame if that would serve the purpose better. A gifted may destroy the material rapidly, effectively causing it to explode. The gifted has some control over the direction the shards will travel. So, theoretically a kinetic is capable of making the shards of a phone booth twist inward, turning against the one inside and leaving everybody else unharmed. Fine tuned control like this imposes a -2 modifier to the roll. When breaking down objects fast the "explosion" takes place at the same moment the power is activated. The damage dealt differs. Exploding a gun in someone's hand would cause 1D/2 deadly damage to the victim while a person caught in a car, which is effectively made to implode, would suffer damage as in ground zero range of a hand grenade or worse. The storyteller is the final arbiter of damage and area of effect. If the gifted so chooses he may have an object break down at a slower rate (within 1D/2 rounds).

Base cost: 18

Successes: 4

PRECOGNITION

Precognition is one of the trickiest powers that a character can have since it allows him to ask of things to come. When a player asks, the storyteller has to give him an answer, but has to do so in a way that doesn't ruin the plot but is still helpful. The future is never set but constantly in motion, the fact that the character is viewing the future may actually change it. The best way to deal with direct "will I die if I do this and that" questions is to be vague but helpful.

If a character were to ask: "Will I die if I go into the museum?" a storyteller may answer: "Only if you walk into the kingdom of the raven." When arriving at the museum the player character sees that the historical significance of the raven in popular culture is on display in a specific section, and if he is stupid enough to venture into this display section he will be in mortal peril and probably die. Be vague but helpful. If the gifted wish to ask about the same thing (to which they already got an answer) in order to see if their actions have affected the future the cost of the ability will go up by 5 essence points and he will suffer a -1 modifier. Discerning a future changed by an earlier viewing is more demanding.

***Note:** Precogs are a bit different and do not use Cool to activate their power. Instead they use Gut Feeling + Focus to create their dice pools.*



LESSER

All "precogs" possess a sixth sense they may use. This isn't an exact vision of things to come but it may give them a hint before something will happen. When using this ability they cannot do much else than walk half speed and talk while concentrating. Things that will directly affect them (or those in close proximity to them) will be sensed. They cannot discern what will happen but can distinguish if it is a danger or something more low-keyed. After they

have a premonition that something will happen the event will occur within seconds.

If someone is to enter the room the precog may discern that “someone is coming” but if this person doesn’t pose an immediate threat he won’t sense any danger. The person may turn out dangerous later (if provoked he might turn on the group but this wasn’t his initial intent). The power also lets the precog know if a danger or “event” lies in wait behind doors they are about to enter.

If something dangerous is about to happen they may feel it and know it is something bad, but they cannot discern the specifics (collapsing roof, ambush). When a distortion to the Coil is about to become active (or if a dark one is about to show up) the precog often gets in a state of emotional upheaval, wishing to get away from the area. He cannot define what is about to happen other than that it is something incredibly “wrong”. After activation this power is in effect for the rest of the scene (the investigation of a house, the hours the precog takes watch during the night, etc) and lasts until the psychic is distracted (attacked or subjected to other physical or psychological shocks) or if he engages in any other type of action other than focusing, talking and walking slowly.

Cost: 10
Successes: 1

SUBSTANTIAL

At a substantial magnitude the gifted may ask a direct question concerning the future. Always have in mind that the player may only ask questions from the character’s point of view, which means that a question like “Will we succeed with unraveling the plot of this story?” would not be eligible. The character certainly doesn’t view his terrifying experiences and predicaments as a “story”. He *may* ask a question like: “Will we find the sect we’re looking for?” as this is a question based on what the character has experienced. The question has to be a “yes or no” question, but the storyteller doesn’t have to answer with a yes or no as such.

As mentioned earlier, a storyteller should always be somewhat vague; the future isn’t set in stone, but the player should always get a glimpse of the future and things to come in a way that answers his question and is helpful. You could describe what he sees, not answering questions as such, but describing events, leaving clues which will allow the player to discern when and where things are about to happen.

Base cost: 15
Aspect cost: 2

GREATER

The system is exactly the same as with substantial only that the precog may ask three “yes or no” questions concerning the future. Beyond this he will get a “free” hint that is useful. The storyteller decides what it is (an ambush maybe). When the character comes to this place he will be able to get a “heads up”.

Cost: 20
Successes: 4

PSYCHOMETRY

In a way, this ability is the opposite of precognition. The gifted may use it to see things that has already happened. It is most effective when used to read objects and only partly helpful when used to read living targets. Objects don’t have any emotions or thoughts and the gifted is able to decide what information he wishes to obtain. What is viewed when touching an individual is totally random depending on what the individual is feeling and thinking. Only uncertain and vague images are discerned when touching a living creature.

When reading an object only things directly connected to the object can be viewed. Touching a book found in a bag dropped by a fleeing gunman would not provide any information about the shootings (only what the book has been through earlier), but touching the gun or shell casings left on the scene would provide the gifted with information as these were directly involved. A gifted using this ability actually relives things that have taken place in a way and may break down in tears or screams of pain or react in fear temporarily. Monstrous dark ones are rarely perceived to a full extent, only appearing as dark shadows and fearful apparitions. This is the mind protecting itself from mental shock.

LESSER

At this magnitude the gifted may get a sense of an object or a person. They can only get a feeling of what has happened. Sorrow, violence, fear and such can be picked up. They cannot really tell exactly when these things have occurred but know if it ranges from hours, days, weeks, months or years ago. This may not seem helpful but is actually very good to use when assessing if an object is worth viewing using higher magnitudes. This is the only magnitude that may be used to view living beings.

Base cost: 5
Successes: 1

SUBSTANTIAL

The gifted is capable of discerning more accurate information of things he views. The player may ask one “yes or no” question which the storyteller answers to the best of his ability. Overall questions won’t work and more precise ones are needed. A question like: “What happened here?” isn’t a valid one but a question like “Did the killer take anything from the victim?” would be a valid question.

Cost: 10

Successes: 2

GREATER

At a greater magnitude the gifted may view even more information. First of all the gifted may ask two “yes or no” questions and also gets 1D/2 tangible minor clues or details per question if pertinent; smaller things that may lead the gifted to ask even further questions. If a gifted picks up a knife that has been used in the murder he may establish if the killer is male or female, but without asking a dozen “yes or no” questions he won’t be able to tell what the killer looks like. The minor clues might entail things like “a flash of long golden hair” or “a smell of lavender perfume”; this for example would indicate a woman and give some insight into what she looks like. The storyteller decides how to use this, but it is a great way to role-play this ability and add to a feel of mystery.

Base cost: 20

Successes: 3

PYROKINESIS

Pyrokinesis is the ability to control fire and to set things on fire with pure force of will. The ability can be used both to protect oneself and others from fire or as an offensive weapon. Pyrokinesis doesn’t create “fire bolts” that the gifted may throw but it lets them accelerate molecules in materials causing them to combust.

LESSER

Only materials that are easy to set on fire can be affected. Hair, paper, dry wood, cloth and similar materials may be ignited. The gifted may also shape or extinguish small fires (not much bigger than a very small camp fire). Only a small part of a material can be made to burst into flames. A pyrokinetic would not be able to ignite a whole jacket but could ignite one of the sleeves.

Base cost: 8

Success: 1



SUBSTANTIAL

Using this magnitude a pyrokinetic may ignite most parts of an object that is easily set on fire naturally, and he is now capable of igniting materials that are more fire resistant as well. Wood, compact plastic and similar materials may now be ignited. The volume of a material may not weigh more than five kilos. It would be possible to start a fire on a part of a wooden wall (that probably would continue to burn the entire house down given time) but it would not be possible to make a whole wall combust. The pyrokinetic may also control bigger flames (the equivalent of a bonfire). He may cause the fire to burst out in any given direction, extending as a pillar to engulf victims. So he can set fire to a portion of a wall and then use his powers to aggravate it, causing a major conflagration.

The range a burst of fire can be extended equals the pyrokinetic's Cool times four. Doing this rapidly uses up the fuel of a fire, making it burn out almost twenty times faster. By concentrating the gifted may extinguish a fire of the same size. If successful it will be extinguished within 1D rounds, small fires can be extinguished almost immediately. If the gifted is disturbed during this time the fire takes hold again, burning normally. It is also possible to shape a fire, making the flames give way so one could pass without being burned. A gifted may move at walking speed, and talk, while shaping a fire but cannot do anything else. The control lasts for 1D+8 rounds.

Base cost: 12

Successes: 2

GREATER

At this magnitude a pyrokinetic may ignite most materials, which are flammable (maximum 10 kilos) and may even melt metal and stone (or cool them down). Using this magnitude a gifted may cause the outer layers of skin and fat in a living being to blister as the molecules accelerate, basically creating microwaves. This causes 1D/2 deadly hit point of damage and ignores armor. Where the blisters appear is random since the gifted attack the whole skin as one single object. Creatures that have damage reduction (or natural armor) are hurt in the same way as anyone else as this affects them on a molecular level.

Fires that can be controlled, shaped and distinguished are equal in size to a large house burning violently. These flames can be caused to burst out as far as the pyrokinetic's Cool times 15 meters. The intense concentration for controlling fire is the same as for the substantial magnitude but the control only lasts for 1D+1 rounds

Base cost: 18

Success: 4

TELEKINESIS

Telekinesis lets gifted move physical objects by force of will alone. The powers range from sliding a book across a table to awesome displays of telekinetic abilities (such as moving a small car by force of will). The gifted have to see the object in question (using psychic abilities to "see" would also do the trick) in order to affect it.

If the gifted wants to harm someone the actual Cool + Focus roll functions just like a Attention + Shooting roll. Each success adds 1 point worth of damage and the storyteller decides the base damage (and if it is fatal or bashing) depending on the object used. If there is ever a need to make a contested test (like if someone tries to hold on to an object) the gifted uses his Cool + Focus versus the targets Brawn. The magnitude used imposes a modifier to those who tries to resist. See below.

Lesser: -

Substantial: -3

Greater: -8

Example: Janice is a telekinetic and she is confronted by a shotgun wielding madman. She wants to use her powers to rip the shotgun out of his hands. She uses the power at the Substantial Magnitude. She rolls her Cool + Focus, and scores 2 successes so the power is activated (it will be activated for 5 rounds, see system below). However, the gunman tries to resist as she uses her mind to tug at the weapon. He has a Brawn score of 3, giving him a pool of 6. But as Janice uses the Substantial Magnitude he suffers a -3 modifier, reducing his dice pool to 3. The storyteller rolls the dices and incredibly enough he manages to score 3 successes. The guy still holds his shotgun and fires it, but the storyteller decides that the shot misses this time without even rolling since the guy was taken by surprise when an invisible force yanked at the weapon. Next time he fires he will not miss automatically, but he will suffer a substantial negative modifier instead as Janice will continue to yank at the weapon.

It is the next round (Janice acts first as her Cool is higher than the Reaction of her enemy) and she tries to get at the gun again. This time she scores one success on her Cool + Focus roll, but her enemy fails completely. The gun is ripped from his hands and it floats mid air. Janice turns it on him, cocks it and is contemplating what to do next.

LESSER

With this magnitude smaller objects and creatures (weighing no more than five kilos) may be made to slide across a surface at a speed equal to the gifted one's Cool x 2 per round, or they may be levitated at a speed equal to the gifted one's Cool score per round. Also, they move far too slow to be used to cause harm (an electric drill could still be quite a nasty thing though).

The gifted may also exert fine tuned control over the object and it is quite possible to fire a gun, type on a keyboard or flip the pages in a book. If skill tests are needed (such as for firing a gun) Cool + appropriate skill is used. The control lasts for 1D+2 rounds. If the gifted wishes to extend the duration he doesn't have to make a roll as long as he concentrates and only needs to pay the essence cost.

Cost: 5

Successes: 1

SUBSTANTIAL

The weight of the object or person can now be as much as fifty kilos. These can be levitated at a speed equal to the gifted one's Cool x 2, or dragged across a surface at about 20 km/h. These objects can cause damage and temporarily pin someone. Objects weighing five or less kilos can be flung at great speeds, harming foes significantly. The duration of control exercised over objects lasts for 1D+2 rounds. The gifted loses control over objects flung directly after they have been thrown. It is now possible to rip objects from their place and out of the hands of people as well.

Base cost: 12

Aspect cost: 3

GREATER

This magnitude is one of the most awesome displays of psychic power available. Objects flung may weigh up to one hundred kilos and objects that can be moved at the speed of the gifted one's Cool per round, or pushed with great force is a metric ton. It is now possible to rip a variety of objects from their place. Even things such as lamp posts can be ripped from the concrete and flung at enemies.

It is impossible to exert "control" over individual parts of a living being so it is *not* possible to suffocate or crush the larynx of a foe. Stopping the heart or any other similar action is also impossible. However, flinging a person into a wall and crushing him, or lift him a hundred meters up into the air and then drop him is quite possible.

The duration of moving objects slowly is 1D+2 rounds as with the other magnitudes and extended control works in the same way as well.

Base cost: 18

Successes: 3

TELEPATHY

Telepathy lets you get inside someone's head, reading his mind or sending him messages. Those who know of this power fear it since it lets a gifted enter their minds, delving in their innermost secrets.

A lot of information may be gleaned using this power and it is a powerful tool indeed. The gifted have to be able to see the target of the scan in order to be able to read his mind. All gifted sense if a telepath is trying to scan them and in this case they may try to resist. At the cost of 5 essence points they may put up a defense. The scanning telepath must beat the resisting gifted in a simple contested test, Cool + Focus versus Cool + Focus. If the one performing the scan is successful he may enter the mind of the other telepath; if the attacked telepath resists he thwarts the attempt. Non gifted that has been scanned several times and know about telepathy (or has been instructed by a gifted) may try to resist in the same way but suffer a -2 modifier.

When reading the minds of dark ones, all sorts of things may be seen. However, the information is often scattered, and the twisted and gloomy labyrinth of a dark one's mind is often too much to handle. Scanning a defiled is usually no problem but half-breeds may have the most bizarre and inhuman thought patterns that actually may cause the loss of psyche points in a telepath. What about reading the mind of a full blood? Well, you will probably think of something inauspiciously wicked if a player does that.

LESSER

At this level the telepath has limited access to surface thoughts. When he scans a person he may only view those thoughts that the individual is thinking of. The storyteller describes these thoughts with three words, only using nouns and adjectives. A good way to obtain information is to ask a question that may lead the victim to think of the information the telepath is looking for.

Cost: 5

Successes: 1

SUBSTANTIAL

At a substantial level the telepath may burrow deep inside the mind of a person to obtain specific information. There are two ways to go about obtaining information buried deep within the mind of a person. Either the player gets to ask one "yes or no" question or they may ask a question and choose that the storyteller answers with four words only using nouns and adjectives. A player may ask: "Does he know where the sect is hidden?" and get a yes or no answer, or if the player chooses the storyteller may answer with four words. If the answer to the above question were to be "Mountain, house, cold, desolated." There is a good

chance that the sect is hiding near or on a mountain in a house (that might have no power since it is cold) in a desolated area.

It is also possible for a telepath to communicate using this ability. Messages are sent as mental images described using the same system as above. The target needn't be willing to accept the information but the telepath needs to be able to see the person to communicate with him.

Cost: 10

Successes: 2

GREATER

Now the gifted may access large portions of a person's thoughts. People don't realize that they are being scanned when the telepath uses lesser or substantial telepathy, but when this power is employed they do. First of all the telepath needs skin to skin physical contact to use this power and secondly the stress it puts on the human mind causes the victim to lose 1 psyche point and one hit point due to the shock. It is also rather painful. The gifted needs to have contact with the victim for five rounds while concentrating.

The player asks about a specific piece of information using as many words as he wishes to narrow it down. The power accesses the memory and thoughts of a person on a deep level. If looking at a memory the character may view 1D/2+1 memories regarding a specific event or piece of information. The storyteller explains an event to the best of his ability. A player may ask: "In what way is he involved with the sect?" and the storyteller may answer describing the memory of the subject, putting the character inside the role of the person: *"You're very nervous. You hate these people but you have no choice, they have your daughter. If you tell anyone they will kill her, and so, you have to keep helping them."* Another way to describe it is through a short story where the storyteller describes a scene experienced by the person from memory: *"The docks are cold and dark, you stand shivering glaring at the headlights of the incoming car. It stops in front of you and a man steps out. He is of slim build with a rat-like face and a perverse shimmer in his eyes. He smiles, telling you that your daughter will be safe as long as you do what you're told. You want to kill the bastard!"*

Another way to use this power is to communicate with someone at a distance. The only criterion is that the gifted has met the individual previously in person. You cannot use this ability to read minds from afar, only to send images.

Base cost: 18

Successes: 3

MAGIC

Magic is an ancient lore that has developed, evolved and changed during the eons. It has been with us since the days of old. Magic is the system of belief, which lets a human affect the world around him using his inner power and ambient essence. Magic may be used to control the Coil and the dark ones to a certain extent.

In the case of arch-glyphic magic the essence of the individual is used to draw dark energies into his very soul, leaving him spiritually damaged, and this eats away at his mentality. Human magic only uses dark energies in some cases and when it does these energies are never drawn into the user, the essence of the gifted is used to mould and control the flow of the dark energies, leaving the practitioner untouched.

In the world of magic there are four types of magic: *White, Gray, Black and Dark*. White magic is used to aid others without any personal gain. Gray is also used to aid others but in a way that serves the gifted himself (asking for payment for service, or performing rituals to gain something without harming or making things hard for another). Black magic is used to harm others or getting yourself benefits at the expense of others. Then there is dark magic (arch-glyphic magic).

Dark magic is often very tempting to both gifted and those who don't possess the ability and discipline needed to perform magic. Dark magic is hard to come by but relatively easy to use. On the other hand it is dangerous. There is seldom a coherent belief system attached to these rituals and anyone can use them. Also, dark magic seems to delve into powers from beyond which most have no clue how to handle.

Many gifted who practice magic scoff at those who use dark magic but often feel drawn to it themselves. The most dangerous part is that this magic is known to drive even the strongest gifted mad in the end, but many don't care as they lose themselves in the power and insanity.

CIRCLES OF UNDERSTANDING

A gifted using magic has a belief system through which he channels his art. It may be Wicca, Demonology, Cabbala or another system. The gifted believes that his devotion to his faith is the very thing that gives him the ability to do what he does. Of course, he acknowledges other faiths to be valid since they too make it possible for gifted to use magic, but he thinks his faith to be the most suitable and organized one.

In the world of Noctum, religion is nothing but a rather meaningless construct made by humans to explain what they cannot understand and relieve humanity of responsibility and decision making. There is no heaven or hell, no gods, demons or spirits as such. Dark energy

that has been shaped into shadowy regions and vile beings by the force of human malevolence makes up the largest portion of the hidden world. Then there is the human soul, which may produce an astonishing effect by funneling essence.

As a gifted progress in the art of magic he starts to understand that there is more to the world than his faith, or rather he starts to comprehend that his faith has nothing to do with his ability. But the road to enlightenment is long and hard, and people gifted with magic have to go through circles of understanding.

There are four different circles of understanding: *Searching*, *Delving*, *Questing*, and *Enlightened*. Each one represents a way of viewing magic. Only the most knowledgeable and powerful gifted are capable of reaching the stage of enlightenment. These stages aren't known as such by the occult community but are rather a personal journey that each and every practitioner of magic has to make on his own. You can never "learn" a circle of understanding it has to be gained through a lifetime of magical experimentation and study.

SEARCHING

Those who have just taken their first shaky steps into magic are searching. At this stage they have just found an appropriate faith and magical system that works, and have access only to basic arcane rituals. They aren't entirely convinced of the magical system as of yet but they are getting there. Characters that learn magic during play start out at this stage. They are incapable of performing magic without their foci or temple (if a temple is needed).

DELVING

The gifted is devoted to his faith and magical system and knows it is the right way. He has learned his first real rituals and has seen the awesome power. He is

hungry for more and delves into arcane lore within his system. In his zeal, he has a tendency to regard other system as inferior or lacking somehow. This is the stage most new characters with magical ability will belong to. As of yet they aren't capable of creating their own rituals, only studying those of their faith. They may perform their magic outside the realms of their temple but still need their foci. However, rituals conducted outside the temple are counted as being one level lower.

QUESTING

When a gifted reaches this stage he has started to question his faith and magical system, not the validity but the limits. He has gained a deeper understanding and accepts other systems as well. This acceptance lets him borrow concepts from other faiths, adapting them to his own and creating new rituals. He doesn't need his temple or foci when performing rituals from his own faith but needs both temple and foci if performing rituals of his own design. It takes time and knowledge to reach this stage and a character often has to play through many stories focusing on his art in order to reach it.

ENLIGHTENED

The gifted has moved beyond the boundaries of faith and magical systems, and understands that everything is about affecting the world by will alone. He only needs the frame of a ritual (gestures, words, criteria) to be able to perform it and he doesn't need a foci or a temple. Besides creating his own rituals (which now may be a merge of all kinds of systems) he may learn rituals from any system. Other than this, he may use any type of magic (black, white or gray) without adding to the risk of activating an aspect and he doesn't need to prepare before performing a ritual. The danger of reaching this stage is that gifted often want even more, turning to dark magic and relics believing themselves capable of handling it. The storyteller has to decide when (and if) a gifted character is capable of reaching this stage.



MAGICAL SYSTEMS

The magical systems are endless in reality but in Noctum some of the most well known, suiting and common, are dealt with. The magical systems adhere to one faith or another, and decide what type of magic they usually engage in. Styles of life, temples, and focus common to followers are also covered. Since a long and in-depth philosophical, theological and historical background of all the systems would require more words than needed to fill enough volumes to support a small library, only the basics of the systems will be explained.

If a gifted uses a type of magic that his faith frown upon the risk of falling under the sway of an aspect is even greater. When the storyteller rolls to see if an aspect affects the character a score of 14 to 16 will activate an aspect as the ritualist has broken the ethical code of his faith when using magic. If a follower of Wicca (a faith that doesn't condone the use of black magic) uses a ritual for selfish ends only, or to harm another, it would be considered black magic and a breach of ethics. This would mean that a score of 14 to 16 would activate the aspect of the card drawn.

There are many people that "practice" magic in the world but only a few are gifted - able to produce any real effect. Most just dabble (most major "magical" groups in the world in fact) without gaining anything other than a sense of belonging and a belief of being able to control one's life. Gifted have that spark of extra essence, discipline and strength of will required when performing magic to produce an effect. Most keep this to themselves since they

learn all too quickly that people become afraid, jealous or wish the gifted to teach them something you have to be born with, leaving them quite ostracized in the end.

DEMONOLOGY

This magical system is very obscure and most references to demonology refer to it as only the theoretical knowledge of demons (which in most cases it is). Gifted who use demonology see themselves as a type of custodians of the demons; they have bound them using symbols and words of power.

Demonologists don't believe in God, heaven, hell or the devil. They view demons as a lesser but powerful race that reside in another dimension. However, they do use Islamic, Jewish and Catholic symbols and names of demons to force them into service, as they know these entities have been bound to submit to these since days of old. There is always a constant debate among practitioners of this faith as to why demons are forced to do so, and everyone has a theory of their own.

As custodians of demons the gifted who use this system have to be very decisive, enticing the demons with sacrifices or forcing them through pain. This reflects on what kind of magic they use. Only white and black magic is accepted, you shall either help another by free will or help yourself (or harm another) with the highest power and conviction. Gray magic is an in-between and is viewed as a sign of weakness and uncertainty.

The temple of a demonologist has to contain a slate of black rock or crystal (no more than thirty centimeters in diameter is required) upon which he places his writings. Black candles, absence of sunlight and electrical light and the burning of a small amount of sulphur are also important parts of the temple layout. On the floor (surrounding the altar and the gifted) an intricate (and often permanent) circle is drawn that protects the demonologist from being harmed or influenced by demonic powers.

As foci they use parchments (Greek, Hebrew, Latin or Persian are the most common languages,) from which invocations are read. Amulets, daggers and chalices are often used.

VOODOO/VODU/HOODOO

Voodoo is a religion as well as an oral tradition and magical system. Many who believe in voodoo don't practice magic as such, but make use of it as a religion only. It hails from Africa and contains a wide range of ritual practices.

Voodoo has a complex pantheon of gods and deities. The supreme deity in voodoo is Nana Buluk, the supreme god creator of all that is. This androgynous god has two children, Mawu (god of the moon) and Lisa (god of the sun). Beyond this there are more godly entities, for example, Mawu has seven male and female twins, who all serve a purpose. There are many types of voodoo that differs depending on region and ethnicity. Some focus on the worship of household spirits more than the omnipotent gods of the pantheon.

There is also the practice of Vodou. Vodou is commonly mistakenly called voodoo by most (in practically every corner of popular culture). The most famous system of Vodou is the Haitian Vodou, which is strongly centered on the belief in Loas. These are the spirits of Vodou. They are many and diverse, and are divided into the three Loa families: Petro, Ghede and Rada. These in turn have many spirits attached to them.

Then there is Hoodoo, which is a term for a more traditional African folk magic. All these differ in many ways but also have many similarities, for the sake of simplicity only the title Voodoo will be used to describe all three beliefs. The basic principle for conducting rituals is similar enough, and doesn't need to be divided into three different explanations.

The magic of voodoo concentrates on understanding the universe and all that is through ritual practice and prayer in order to affect reality and living beings through that understanding. Voodoo uses all kinds of foci and sacrifices in its rituals. There are two types of paths that a gifted may choose from when practicing voodoo: The path of black magic or the path of white magic. Those practicing white magic are known as Houngan and those who practice black magic are called Bokor. Both sides may practice gray magic without repercussions.

A voodoo temple needs only to be sanctified and have some candles of varying colors in order to serve the gifted as a place of worship. Foci often include seashells with certain symbols and silk stripes of varying color tied around the ankle or the wrist. Powders and ashes of various herbs (Bokors sometimes use ash from burned flesh and bone) are a very frequent type of tool employed.

CABBALA

Cabbala is an old Jewish mystical teaching. This system is very tightly bound to the concept of the Sephirot, which literary means "Numbering" (also referred to as the Cabbalistic tree of life). The Sephirot consists of ten levels of creation (ten Sephirots) but these levels are all one and the same and shouldn't be regarded as separate from one another. All of them meet in the center called "Da'at", meaning knowledge.

Certain esoteric theories of Cabbala resemble those of Gnosticism but linking them together is a mistake. Gnostics and those who believe in Cabbala share the idea that we all carry with us a divine spark of the one true god; not only that, they believe we are a part of this deity. To reach enlightenment we need to awaken this spark in order to transcend. But Gnostics believe that this transcendence will lead to us abandoning this world (which they view as inheritably evil) only transcending oneself, while Jewish mysticism teaches that this transcendence will add to the world as a whole (which followers believe to be dualistic in nature, both good and evil).

These Gnostic overtones took hold during the Middle Ages, referring to the Qliphoth (left side of the Cabbalistic tree of life) as an imbalance that brought impurity (and evil) to the world. The three Sephirots in the Qliphoth (Binah, Gebhura and Hod) are sometimes referred to as death angels (see Qliphoth magical system). Many modern-day Cabbalists still view the Qliphoth as the source of all the evil in the world.

Cabbala utilizes symbols, anagrams and numerology in many ways. Cabbalists call upon different aspects of God and summon angels, spirits and demons. The Keys of Solomon is a Cabbalistic grimoire (divided into the Lesser and Greater Key also known as Ars Gotia). Words in the Torah hide secret meanings according to Cabbalists, and by finding these they gain insight.

Cabbalists have no preferred type of magic (this is a personal preference) but due to this broad spectrum all who practice Cabbala always stand a greater chance of becoming swayed by an aspect. When rolling to check if an aspect takes hold a result of 19-20 will activate an aspect.

As foci Cabbalists use daggers, wands, chalices (corresponding with the elements) and talismans. A Cabbalistic temple has a small table traditionally painted black to represent how far away one is from the spiritual

enlightenment that comes from above. Beyond this, there should be incense and candles burning. Cabbalists are often of a Jewish faith but it isn't necessary.

QLIPHOTH

Qliphot magic is diversely removed from Cabbala as it mixes Cabbalistic symbolism with Gnosticism and the works of Aleister Crowley (a renowned occultist active during the early and mid 1900s). Those devoted to Qliphoth regard it to actually be an entire Sephirot of its own, in opposite to the original; some call the Qliphoth magical system "the dark roots of the tree of life".

Every Sephirot on the original tree of life has an "evil twin", which stands for the opposite of its kin according to Qliphot. These are as follows (those in *italic* are the original Sephirot):

Thamiel-*Kether*, Chaigidel-*Chokmah*, Sathariel-*Binah*, Gamchicoth-*Chesed*, Golab-*Geburah*, Togaririm-*Tiphereth*, Harab Serapel-*Netzach*, Samael-*Hod*, Gamaliel-*Yesod*, Nehemoth-*Malkuth*.

The actual rituals and symbols used in Qliphoth are very similar to those of the Cabbala but the intent is often very different, and some practitioners refer to Binah, Hod and Geburah as the angels of death. Strength and the ability to manipulate reality and others aided by the dark roots are very important, and doing anything without gain or a show of strength is frowned upon. Only gray and black magic is commonly practiced by those gifted that have faith in this magical system. The temple and foci are the same as with Cabbala.

SANTERIA

Santeria has its roots in the belief of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, and is an Afro-Caribbean religion and magical practice. One practicing this system is referred to as Santero (or Santera if female). These are the priests and priestesses of the faith, and they are the fathers and mothers of the Orishas.

Orishas are spiritual godly entities that are called upon when performing rituals. They often bear the names of saints since the slaves had to rename their deities in this way to hide them from their captors in order to preserve their belief. Each Orisha has an attribute, which may be used to certain ends, but they crave small sacrifices in return.

Santeria uses a lot of different substances as foci in their rituals such as crushed eggshells, herbal powders and dried flowers. In many of their rituals they engage in *Ebó*, the sacrificing of animals. This is seen as a gift to the Orishas and nothing goes to waste as practitioners prepare and cook the animal afterwards. The sacrifices have left them with a bad reputation among Westerners and those of

Christian faith, as they believe Santeria to be inheritably evil. This is an uninformed misconception. As with voodoo, the Santeros and Santeras choose if they want to walk the path of black or white magic. The concept of the ritual sacrifices is no more bizarre than kosher butchering or the Catholic communion. A gifted that practices Santeria may specialize in performing either black or white magic, and is always capable of performing grey magic without any additional risk. Their temples need to have a table with at least four candles and four small statues of saints (who are hidden Orishas).

WICCA

Wicca is a modern religion and magical system that is greatly inspired by shamanism and New Age dogmatism, but is said to have its root in the witchcraft of old as well. It is the practice of modern day witches. It hails somewhat from pre-Christian paganism as well and is often referred to as "the old religion". Gerald Gardner introduced the old religion to the modern world in the 50s. Today most practitioners are women but the religion has no gender preference.

Wiccan magic differs from group to group, only adhering to some ritualistic key elements. It is a very loosely structured ritualistic system, which inspires its believers to improvise and experiment. They also celebrate the eight Wiccan Sabbaths of the year. Samhain (October 31), Beltane (Early May) and Imbolc (February 1) are examples of three of these.

Wiccans use cauldrons, brooms, athame (ritual dagger), chalices, crystals, incense and similar objects and tools as foci. All Wiccans have a so-called Book of Shadows in which they write down their rituals, dreams, and magical progress. This is their most prized possession and may not be viewed by any other. Many write in code in order to keep their knowledge out of the hands of outsiders. This code system is much to blame for the bad reputation some witches in the older days had (beside the fact that the church hunted women as men of power feared them all too often). When their books were found a ritual could demand that "the bone of a child" and "the blood of a virgin" was to be sacrificed. In actuality this was code for "the bark of a willow" and "the juices of an apple". These codes were meant to frighten off and discourage people from trying to steal their knowledge if the book fell in the wrong hands. Sadly it got many witches burned or hanged in the old days.

The Wiccan religion and belief system is inheritably good and teaches its practitioners to be one with nature and to treat others with kindness. In Wicca it is believed that evil begets evil and all bad you do to others comes back threefold, and only white and gray magic is practiced. Wiccans need to be outdoors under an open sky to perform their magic and also need a candle and their cauldron, which makes up the "altar" of their "temple". Basic arcane rituals can be performed anywhere though.

RITUALS

The rituals are the fundamental keys by which a gifted devoted to magic may unlock the powers of the hidden world. They are often time-consuming and it takes dedication and knowledge to perform them. The rituals will be described using some terminology: Base cost, Aspect cost, foci, criteria, time and special. Base cost and aspect cost work exactly as described earlier in this chapter. Foci, special, time and criteria will need some clarification.

Foci: Foci can be described using one of three ways: Minimal, Heavy and Pivotal. This shows the amount of foci required to perform the ritual. Minimal indicates that only one focus (such as a dagger or amulet) is needed. When a large number of foci (heavy) are required, a lot more magical tools have to be used. This usually means that five tools (oils, powders, daggers and such) are used to perform the ritual. When foci are pivotal the gifted uses just about every focus that their magical system entails to perform the ritual. More powerful rituals require more foci.

Criterion: Some rituals have a criterion that has to be met. Every magical system can utilize any one of the rituals but the criteria have to be met either way. Some systems frown upon certain rituals; a Wiccan isn't likely to sacrifice a living animal while a Santera does this as a common practice. Under the heading *special*, things that have to do with the dark ones (and the aspect of the dark path) will be listed. Time, of course, states the number of hours a ritual takes to complete.

Before being able to perform a Major Arcane Ritual the gifted has to prepare. Each magical system uses a different method to achieve the correct state of mind required. This takes about fifteen minutes and requires a Cool + Occult test. If unsuccessful, the gifted have to try again, they cannot perform a ritual before they are prepared.

Note: No ritual may be repeated over and over again to affect the same victim in order to aggravate or strengthen the effect. The duration has to run out or the influence of the ritual has to be vanquished before the same type of ritual can be used on the same victim again.

THE FLOW

Only a few rituals produce effects that are directly noticeable in the actual locale where the ritual takes place, but those watching a gifted work his art will still be impressed. When a gifted performs a ritual he releases his essence, shaping it to affect the world. This is noticeable to some degree.

There are no glowing lights, flashes or similar spectacular occurrences but it feels as if the place is filled with static electricity, making the hairs on the back of the neck to stand up. Subtle smells can also be detected. When a ritual of white or gray magic is performed the smells are nice and can resemble anything from chocolate to roses. Black magic produces a smell of putridity, brimstone and decay.

Beyond this, ambient shadows seem to move in weird ways, ominous if black magic is used and soothing if white or gray magic is performed.

These effects are caused by the subconscious of the gifted. This is unknown to most gifted. They simply give the magical deed a slight visual and olfactory representation to strengthen their own resolve and belief. Gifted will say it is a way for the "spirits", "angels", "demons" or whatnot to show themselves. This phenomenon is simply known as the Flow by most occultists.

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS

Magic uses the system of human beliefs to center the will and essence of the practitioner. The religions behind it have nothing to do with it, but it helps the gifted to focus their abilities, as they themselves believe in it. In some ways magic is a form of powerful psychic ability that lets a human affect the world around him. In some cases the essence forms forces or entities of sorts that will make the ritual work, in other cases the essence binds lesser dark ones or makes use of the Coil or dark energies. In the end, it doesn't matter since the ritual produces the desired outcome. Creatures that are summoned may have different powers and "personalities" than usual, this is due to the fact that they are infused by essence and bound to serve the beliefs of the one who summoned them. A demon, for instance, is capable of creating a physical form from the blood of a human when summoned by magic.

DEFINITION: WHITE, GRAY & BLACK

Whenever a character uses magic you have to define what type of magic it is and inform the player. But how does one define magic? For example, using the ritual *Flame of Aphrodite* to make two people fall in love (even if they already are on their way) is actually black magic. Why?

Well, even if the intent was good and the gifted has nothing to gain this was a spell that affected two individuals without their consent, they didn't ask for help. If one of the individuals had asked for help (and if the other one was going to fall in love with that person sooner or later anyway) it would have been white magic. In this case the gifted only sped up a natural process after being asked to do so, without asking anything in return. Hence, white magic. But if the person affected by it would leave a wife or husband because of it, it would have been considered black magic since it had an extremely negative effect on another person.

If you would use the ritual *Blessing of the Spoken* on a willing individual it would be considered to be white magic (even if the person is going to use it to swindle people). If the gifted took payment (or asked a favor in return) or would gain personally from helping the person it would be considered to be gray magic.



Black magic comes in many guises and can be very hard to recognize. Let's say that the gifted wants to find evidence that will nail a killer and uses *Voice from Beyond* to spy on this killer. He learns where the evidence is hidden and calls the cops. A good deed, certainly...but it was black magic. Just spying on someone using rituals is gray magic, bordering on black, but to spy on someone in a way that proves to be detrimental for the victim is indeed black magic. It is a thin line to walk, but remember that you are the final judge. The concept of white, gray, and black magic can be very inspiring to role-play, especially if two characters are gifted magic users and discuss their philosophical viewings of this concept with each other. Also, it tends to raise the question of good and evil. Even if the character is morally okay with doing black magic it may go against his faith, which also may lead him to question his faith.

BASIC ARCANES RITUALS

There are some basic arcane rituals that every gifted devoted to the art of magic knows. These only require a minimal amount of foci and can be performed anywhere. The gifted don't even need their temples.

These are the first rituals learned and everyone proficient in magic has access to them from the start. The rituals differ in style depending on magical system. Symbols and invocations vary as well but they work in the exact same manner. Preparation isn't needed to be able to perform these rituals. These rituals are described only using base cost and aspect cost since they aren't that advanced.

Note: If not otherwise stated under Successes, conducting rituals use Cool + Focus. Though some rituals involves additional rolls which will be described in the ritual text.

CIRCLE OF RESTRAIN

By reciting an invocation while drawing a circle (two meters in diameters) on the ground or floor and surrounding it with binding symbols the gifted creates a temporary prison. This prison may be used to bind incorporeal beings (or those possessed by one).

If an incorporeal being has been exorcised or summoned and is within ten meters of the circle it is automatically transported inside the circle and trapped. If an incorporeal being is already present or arrives it won't be trapped and has to be lured into the circle.

After the circle has been "activated" by a caught being it lasts for 1D+14 hours. Before it is activated it can remain indefinitely or until it is removed (i.e. washed off the surface). The circle can be "refueled" by conducting the ritual again, extending the time in order to contain a trapped being longer.

Cost: 10

Successes: 1

CURSE OF MALICE

Most gifted have at one time or another been ridiculed, scoffed at, or otherwise harassed by another for their weird "hobby" or gift. This is a minor curse that will make the affected feel a bit "off his game". By chanting over an object for five minutes the gifted has effectively cursed it. Every curse is personal and only the intended victim can be affected. The object cannot be bigger than a jacket or smaller than a ring. As long as the victim wears or carries the object he feels a bit down and also gets a -2 modifier to all actions. This is often used to punish those who scorn the gifted.

Cost: 8

Successes: 2

HALLOW THE HEARTH

Whenever he needs to move their temple or create a new one, a gifted has to make the area suitable. He has to drive away influences that may disturb him, and also has to infuse the area with energies of his faith. While this is done he needs to have all his tools, altars and foci present and set up. This ritual takes about two hours after which the place is considered to be a temple. Exactly what is done during this time differs depending on the magical system but it is often an intense ritual. If he hasn't visited the temple in a month or more he has to do it all over again as only his presence keeps the delicate balance from tilting.

Base cost: 20

Successes: Automatic success

QUESTION OF BEFUDDLEMENT

By blurting out a long and confusing string of words, which hides magical knowledge, the gifted may confuse a person (human or defiled). It takes about five rounds to complete. The affected person is befuddled as the words (infused by essence) echo in his mind. He feels that an answer of great importance may be revealed if he can manage to figure out the meaning. The victim is unable to do anything else than think about it, mumbling randomly. This lasts for 1D+3 rounds. If the person is threatened (has a gun pointed at him) or otherwise endangered (or hurt)

the effect immediately wears off. Only one person at a time may be influenced by this power.

Base cost: 8

Successes: The caster must beat the victim in a contested roll, Cool + Occult vs the victim's Cool.

SENSE THE DWELLERS

If a gifted suspects that an unseen force haunts a place he may try to sense it. By drawing a large symbol on the floor or ground, and then stepping inside it, he may try to sense if there is a power present. Ghosts, demons, curses and similar things can be sensed. If the gifted is successful he will know if something haunts the place or not. If he wants to get more information he may make a Attention + Occult roll with a difficulty a -2 modifier. If this as well is successful he may identify (by using the terminology of his magical beliefs) what kind of force it is, and also get a hint of how powerful it is. The ritual takes about fifteen minutes.

***Note:** A place that hides a gateway to the Coil or a distortion is perceived as being haunted by an unknown and extremely malevolent force, in the grip of a very powerful curse, or hold a dark dimensional portal.*

Base cost: 8

Successes: 1

SENSE THOSE WITHIN

This ritual works exactly as *Sense the Dwellers* but is focused on sensing if someone is possessed, cursed or haunted. The individual the gifted wishes to sense has to stand within the circle for fifteen minutes as the gifted chants. This also allows the practitioner to discern if a person is under the effect of any kind of magic.

Base cost: 8

Successes: 1

VANQUISH

It is very important to be able to fight the effects of rituals. This ritual is designed to vanquish the effect of adversarial gifted ones. To vanquish a magical effect takes two hours. The gifted don't have to identify the ritual they are trying to vanquish or even be certain that they (or the one they are trying to help) are under the sway of one. Intricate symbols and signs are drawn on a large parchment or paper while reciting incantations. The person the gifted wish to aid has to be present or the gifted need to have a personal item belonging to him, fresh hair, skin or blood of the person or a recent clear photo. In the end of the ritual the paper is burnt, and the magic is vanquished. It

can be quite dangerous to perform this ritual if the gifted is low on essence as the cost of essence is equal (and seldom known by a character) to the total essence invested in the ritual you try to vanquish. If a ritual took a toll of 35 essence points it would cost the vanquisher an equal amount to dispel it.

Base cost: Special

Successes: The number of success the ritual he is trying to vanquish required plus one.

GREATER ARCANES RITUALS

These are the "big guns" of one capable of performing magic. They are much more powerful and costly than the average basic arcane ritual. Most characters that start out as gifted, who are able to perform magic, have access to three of these rituals. The storyteller is the final arbiter of which rituals are allowed at the beginning of the game. Really powerful ones should be acquired during play and can be the goal of a story or chronicle.

Characters can become better at particular ritual. Greater Rituals have three levels: Understood, Honed and Mastered. They all start out at the understood level. The honed level reduces the essence cost by 2 and adds a +1 modifier to the Cool + Focus roll. Mastered reduces the essence cost by 5 and adds a +2 modifier to the Cool + Focus roll. See the storyteller chapter for more information on how to acquire higher ritual levels.

BIND THE INCORPOREAL

The gifted may bind an incorporeal being to his service. For this ritual to work the gifted has to have an incorporeal being caught in a Circle of Restrain. The being can be asked to perform one service after which it is set free, often returning to its place of origin. The being is set free after forty-eight hours whether or not it has successfully completed its task. These beings rarely agree to severely hurt or kill anyone.

Cost: 12

Successes: 4

Criterion: -

Foci: Heavy

Time: 2

Special: -

BLESSING OF THE SPOKEN

This ritual lets a person seem incredibly attractive and believable to others. When this is in effect the targeted individual gets a +5 modifier to all social tests and always

makes a very good and lasting impression (if not making it impossible by behaving very poorly). This lasts for 1D days.

Cost: 15

Successes: 1

Criterion:

Foci: Minimal

Time: 1

Special: -

EYE OF CHRONOS

This ritual lets the gifted see times of old. He has to have some idea of what he is looking for and be able to narrow down the year within a ten-year margin. If the ritual is successful he is able to focus on a place or person for 1D hours. The information gleaned is somewhat hazy at times and it may be hard to discern details. This is a mental projection and only the gifted may see what is revealed.

Cost: 16

Successes: 3

Criterion: Need to have a mechanical clock, hourglass or sundial present as a representation of time. A mirror or other reflective surface that is used to view the past is also of importance.

Foci: Minimal

Time: 2

Special: If the aspect of the dark path is activated the gifted is likely to be transported to a Domain of Time, or something may come through from this domain.

FLAME OF APHRODITE

All positive feelings one person has for another are strengthened to an extreme degree. Acquaintance becomes devoted friendship, friendship becomes love and love becomes obsession. The ritual cannot make a person have romantic feelings that go against his sexuality (a homosexual cannot be drawn to the opposite sex and a heterosexual cannot be drawn to the same sex) but intense idolization is a possibility. The effect lasts for one week but sometimes some of the feelings may remain depending on how the relationship has developed.

Cost: 15

Successes: 3

Criterion: Has to have a picture or personal possession from both individuals. One lock each of their hair is also viable. A red rose has to be submerged in hot water at the beginning of the ritual.

Foci: Minimal

Time: 1

Special: As they manipulate the forces of passion they may bring the attention of Asmodai (representing twisted lust) and create a temporary distortion to the Womb of Depravity if the Dark Path is activated.

FLAME OF HADES

This is the opposite of the Flame of Aphrodite and turns irritation to anger, anger to pure rage and rage into hate. In extreme cases (if enough animosity was present) it can lead to violence and murder.

Cost: 18

Successes: 3

Criterion: Same as the flame of Aphrodite but the rose needs to be a black one.

Foci: Heavy

Time: 1

Special: May create a distortion to Mastema's realm (Antioch of Anger) if the Dark Path is activated.



HEX

A hex is a curse, the evil eye. The victim of this ritual becomes extremely unlucky. Finances go to hell, his car breaks down, he stumbles, becomes wrongfully accused and all manner of problems hail down on him. The hex lasts for five days.

Cost: 18

Successes: 2

Criterion: Has to have a picture, personal item, blood or lock of hair belonging to the victim.

Foci: Heavy

Time: 2

Special:

INFERNAL SUMMONING

This ritual summons a demon (or powerful malevolent spirit depending on the faith) that can be used to perform a service. The gifted has to have the name of the entity and this ritual is only capable of summoning that entity. If you wish to learn to summon other entities of this kind a new ritual have to be learned (if you can find the name of an entity). The true names of demons can never be found in standard books and your average Bible. Only in the most obscure occult grimoire can they be found.

A demon can only perform services in line with its nature. One who is created to corrupt cannot cause mayhem, one who is hell bent on wanton destruction and death won't be able to corrupt and so forth. When the demon



is summoned it appears as a crimson red swirl, shifting between solid and incorporeal. After the demon has been ordered it disappears to do its master's bidding. Whether or not it has succeeded to complete its task it will return to its domain after a week. This type of ritual is ancient, rare and very dangerous. Many occultists may search for one like it their entire lives without succeeding. It drains the gifted enormously.

Base cost: 35

Successes: 5

Criterion: One liter of fresh human blood has to be spilt within a circle. The demon takes form inside the circle, imbibing the blood. After it has vanished from the sight of the gifted it finds a dark place and forms itself a body (the storyteller decides the specifics of attributes, anima and powers). When it returns to its realm the body dissolves. The storyteller should take time to create a specific demon if a character ever gets hold of this power.

Foci: Pivotal

Time: 4

Special: If the Dark Path is activated the gifted loses himself to the evil powers and at that weak moment the demon will possess him and use him as a host. Sometimes the gifted won't know it and it can become an interesting story. Another option is that the demon takes the gifted to its realm of pain and suffering. A bit harsh you say? C'mon you are summoning a goddamn demon!

KNOW THE SINS

The gifted sends the victim visions of the worst sins he ever committed. The gifted won't be privy to the sin but the afflicted will see it over and over again. Even if the person is a twisted insane killer who enjoys what he does he will feel enormous remorse since the ritual changes the way the person views the sin if needed. The visions come as flashing images (much like flashbacks) sporadically, sometimes several hours can go by without anything happening while at other times the flashes bombard the victim intensely, only tens of seconds apart. The effects of the ritual last for 1D+1 days.

Cost: 18

Successes: 2

Criterion: Has to have a picture, personal object or lock of hair belonging to the victim.

Foci: Heavy

Time: 1

Special:

LEGIONS OF THE DEAD

This ritual lets a character awaken a dead human corpse, effectively creating a revenant. This is considered black magic, as all magical systems believe that a soul (or at least parts of it) is being forced into the body. The creature will obey any command that the gifted gives it, but takes every word literally and cannot think at all on its own. If the creature were told to go inside a house to kill everyone it would do so but would not return afterward if its master didn't tell it to do so. The body will last for 1D+1 days. It simply falls down after the duration has run out. The gifted always senses how long it will last. A gifted may have a number of undead under his control equal to his Cool divided by two at any one time if he wishes.

Cost: 20

Successes: 3

Criterion: The gifted needs to be standing in a circle of salt, and of course, have access to a dead body. The body cannot be older than three months and the brain cannot be too severely damaged. Preserved bodies (frozen or suspended in conservatives) are quite possible to use as long as they have their brains intact and if they weren't older than three months when they were preserved.

Foci: Heavy

Time: 3

Special: If the dark path is activated, the creature turns on its master (and all living things). It also becomes preserved by dark energy, making it capable of staying “alive” for years.

Note: The ritualist creates a Tormented, see the Minions Chapter.

LINK OF THE ANCIENTS

By imbuing two rings with essence the gifted may use them to communicate. One ring is given to the one whom he wishes to be able to speak to. The person who receives the ring doesn't need to be gifted but may only communicate if the creator of the ring “opens a channel”. To use the ring the creator has to concentrate for five minutes and while sitting in a state of relaxation he may communicate. He may only ask “yes or no” questions and the other person may only answer with “yes or no” questions. The other individual feels a slight tingle in the finger when the gifted tries to establish contact and also has to sit down and concentrate while communicating. Every question asked or answered costs five essence to the one asking or answering. A gifted may create a number of ring sets equal to his Cool. If the ring comes off (or if the crystal is broken) it is useless. The power of the rings enables individuals to communicate even if one is in the Coil. Only those still living, and in possession of a soul, may use these rings.

Base cost: 12

Successes: 2

Criterion: Two rings of silver with a piece of red or black crystal attached to them.

Foci: Minimal

Time: 1

Special:-

OTHER SELF

By forcing the soul out of an individual the gifted may enter his body, depositing the victim's soul in the body of the gifted. If the gifted wants, his body containing the other person's soul may fall in a coma-like state (or be left awake). The gifted keeps all his skills and mental aptitudes (not Attention though) but gets all the physical aptitudes of the new body. He may remain for 1D/2 days, but he has to make sure that neither the body of the victim or his own dies.

If the borrowed body dies the gifted is forced back into his own body while the other person dies (he is also forced back if his own body dies). But the soul of the gifted doesn't die as such, only his body. His corpse starts to rot while he is still inside. He has to take over another body once every third month in order to stay alive; if he does that he automatically obliterates the soul of the one he stole the body from. Beyond rotting and smelling foul he has to

find another permanent body, and fast. Only wounds that destroy the brain will kill a character when he is trapped in a rotting corpse and he cannot feel any kind of pain (or physical pleasure). He may only exchange bodies 1D+3 times before his soul is too weak, after which he will lose all faculties becoming a Death Dweller. The biggest problem is this: It is said that no one has been able to figure out a way to transfer into a body under these circumstances without killing it. In the occult, it is rumored that there does indeed exist a spell of life, which could be the key. Alas, no one has found it.

Base cost: Victim's Cool x 8

Successes: 3

Criterion: A person and two white strings of silk. One is bound around the ankle of the victim and the other around the ankle of the gifted.

Foci: Pivotal

Time: 4

Special:-

REALM OF MORPHEUS

The world of dreams is filled with the fantastic and by using this ritual a gifted may influence the dreams of another. He may change and alter everything in the dream and is capable of infusing himself in the dream of another, taking any form. In other words, the gifted has total control over the victim's dream. During the ritual the gifted sits and chants, only vaguely aware of the waking world.

Cost: 10

Successes: 1

Criterion: Has to have a picture, personal object or lock of hair belonging to the victim. The person also has to be asleep.

Foci: Minimal

Time: Until the victim awakens or when the gifted wishes to end it (Concentration).

Special: The activation of the Dark Path may transport the gifted to a Nether of Nightmares or cause him to become host to a Solidus. If a dreamer himself is in a Nether of Nightmares when the gifted enters his dream, the gifted may also be transported.

SIGN OF WARDING

The ritual can be used to protect an area from dark or unwanted forces. The area may not exceed two hundred square meters. It is possible to only ward certain parts of a building or area as well. By drawing symbols of warding inside the area that is to be protected the gifted makes it difficult for supernatural entities to enter. Those already inside may remain but get a -4 modifier to all actions, and if they go outside they will have a hard time getting back in. A creature from the outside may try to get in by succeeding with a Cool test with a -5 modifier. If it is

successful it may enter but suffer the same -4 modifier to all actions. It may stay inside for 1D+3 rounds, any longer and it begins to lose hit points at a rate of 1 per round. These cannot be healed until it is outside. Those already inside when the ritual was cast (if they haven't gone out and in again) don't suffer from this effect. The protection lasts for 1D hours and the gifted will feel when it is about to run out.

Note: This ritual affects all creatures of darkness as well as mystifications from all breeds.

Cost: 12

Successes: 2

Criterion:-

Foci: Minimal

Time: 1/2

Special:

TALISMAN

Being able to create protection against magical attacks is pivotal. This ritual creates a talisman that will protect against magic. When a person has it around his neck it makes it much harder and costly for others to affect them with harmful magic.

Rituals directed at a person protected by a talisman has its essence cost increased by ten and one additional success is needed. Beyond this, the cost of buying successes with hit points and psyche points is increased. It costs 1 additional hit point and two additional psyche points. This means that it is much harder (and costly) to affect someone protected. The talisman is valid for a number of weeks equal to the Cool x 2 of the one who created it. It is possible to create a permanent talisman but this drains eight *permanent* essence points (beyond the regular cost) that have to be bought back with experience points.

Note: If someone tries to direct arch-glyphic magic at the protected person he has to pay the additional essence and also lose an extra 1D psyche points and must pass a Cool + Focus test with a -3 difficulty to be successful.

Cost: 18

Successes: 3

Criterion: The amulet used has to be of either gold or silver.

Foci: Heavy

Time: 2

Special:-

THE HAUNTING

By summoning a malicious entity it is possible to make it haunt a person or place (car, house or apartment building for example), the gifted chooses which. The entity won't

cause any major harm to people but it may create a lot of structural damage and instill fear. This lasts for 1D/2 days or until the gifted ends it. The entity is most active during the night and is quite subtle, hiding its existence somewhat. It may show itself to people when they are alone in order to scare them.

Cost: 15

Successes: 3

Criterion: Has to have a picture, personal object or lock of hair belonging to the victim. If it is a building that is to be haunted the gifted needs to have seen it with his own eyes or have a snapshot of it, a good model or sketch will also do.

Foci: Heavy

Time: 3

Special: Activation of the Dark Path turns the creature against the gifted for the duration of the spell. It may even become violent in this case, causing physical harm. An Ocul or Nethrall is summoned to perform the haunting.

VANQUISH THE UNWILLING

This may be used to drive out incorporeal beings or harmful energies from a place. Some entities or energies (such as powerful curses) require repeated attempts. The gifted has to be at the place he is going to "clean" in order for this to work. This ritual is the only one of the greater arcane ones that any gifted (regardless of circle of understanding) may perform without a temple. Entities and energies often try to rattle and discourage the practitioner when the ritual is conducted, but they cannot attack the gifted mentally or physically directly as he stands within a protective circle. If it is capable, the entity or power may still throw things inside the circle. It is also possible to draw out spirits or demons that have possessed a human or animal by using this ritual. Of course, the possessed usually has to be tied down. It can be quite dangerous to drive away curses and such, as it can take a lot out of the gifted to get rid of the more powerful ones.

Cost: 3 x Resolve of the entity (see the Affliction Section). Stains of evil and curses can be vanquished as well. The essence cost is equal to the amount of ambient stain points (or power points if dealing with a cures).

Successes: 2

Criterion:

Foci: Heavy

Time: From 3 to 12 hours.

Special: The dark path may lead to the character being possessed by an entity or mentally affected by a curse. The storyteller may decide how many times a character has to perform the ritual to succeed. One to three times is the usual range, depending on the strength of the force.

VENGEFUL SERVANTS

This is a very heinous ritual that has but one purpose, and that is to kill someone. The gifted focuses all his scorn and hatred at a single individual and summons dark forces that will do everything in their power to slay the victim. Sometimes the victim survives and sometimes times it does not, but in most cases the servants succeed in their task. It may take some time before they have homed in on the prey (within 1D+2 days). The dark forces stalk the victim, returning from whence they came after they succeed. If they haven't been able to slay the person within 1D/2+1 days after they have found him, they will return to their plane of existence.

Cost 25

Successes: 3

Criterion: Has to have a picture, personal object or lock of hair belonging to the victim. A mammal no smaller than a cat also has to be sacrificed and a wax or cloth doll representing the victim has to be crafted and impaled by spikes or needles.

Foci: Heavy

Time: 3

Special: 1D/2 Fertiay are summoned and will do their best to kill the intended victim. They delay the process in order to feed on the inspiration before they go for the kill. They don't appear in front of the gifted. They stay hidden, only trying to kill the victim when he is alone. When bound by this ritual they become more cunning, being able to cut phone lines and power lines and sabotage cars and other vehicles. Other than this, they are capable of homing in on the victim wherever he is, and can travel the Coil to quickly get where they want in the world with little delay.

VOICE FROM BEYOND

The souls of the dead are often privy to a lot of information. By summoning a spirit of the dead the gifted may call upon its service to glean information. It will do all it can to inform its master of whatever he desires. It is also possible to try and communicate with a specific spirit. Some gifted make money by contacting the dead in this way. After the spirit has arrived it is a "live event". If a spirit is sent out to glean information it will be gone for 2D+5 minutes after which it returns. It will inform the gifted and then disappear. The gifted has to stay focused when he is waiting, doing nothing else. When communicating directly with a spirit the spirit hangs around for 1D+3 minutes (as when talking to someone's dead relative).

Cost: 15

Successes: 2

Criterion: A paper and pen or a slate covered with sand is needed. Through this the spirit communicates by writing. Some gifted are pioneers, using computers on which the spirit may write. Others have managed to use a radio that the spirit may utilize, actually communicating

verbally. Those who have done this say the voice is very eerie and unsettling. When contacting a specific spirit the gifted needs a personal object from the person who died (or a part of his body). When a specific spirit is called by name, it takes it personal and only communicates with the gifted, which is the only one that may hear what it says. It may also use the gifted as a medium, guiding his hand as it writes. Spirits are always cryptic and information can be somewhat scattered but still reliable.

Foci: Minimal

Time: 2 if contacting random spirit, 1 if contacting specific.

Special: An Ocul is summoned and it may travel the Coil to get around fast. It does everything in its power to try to please the gifted. If the dark path is activated the Ocul may attack the gifted and will probably not be in the best of moods, since one of the living was trying to command it to go fetch.

WORD OF SILENCE

This ritual makes it impossible for someone to talk about a certain subject. When the person tries he starts to cough violently or just choke up. If he tries to write it down or communicate it by any other means he begins to shake in a way that makes it impossible. This lasts for 1D/2 days.

Cost: 10

Success: 2

Criterion: You have to have a tongue of a mammal and drive nails through it during the ritual. A personal item, a lock of hair or a picture is required of the victim.

Foci: Minimal

Time: 1

Special: -

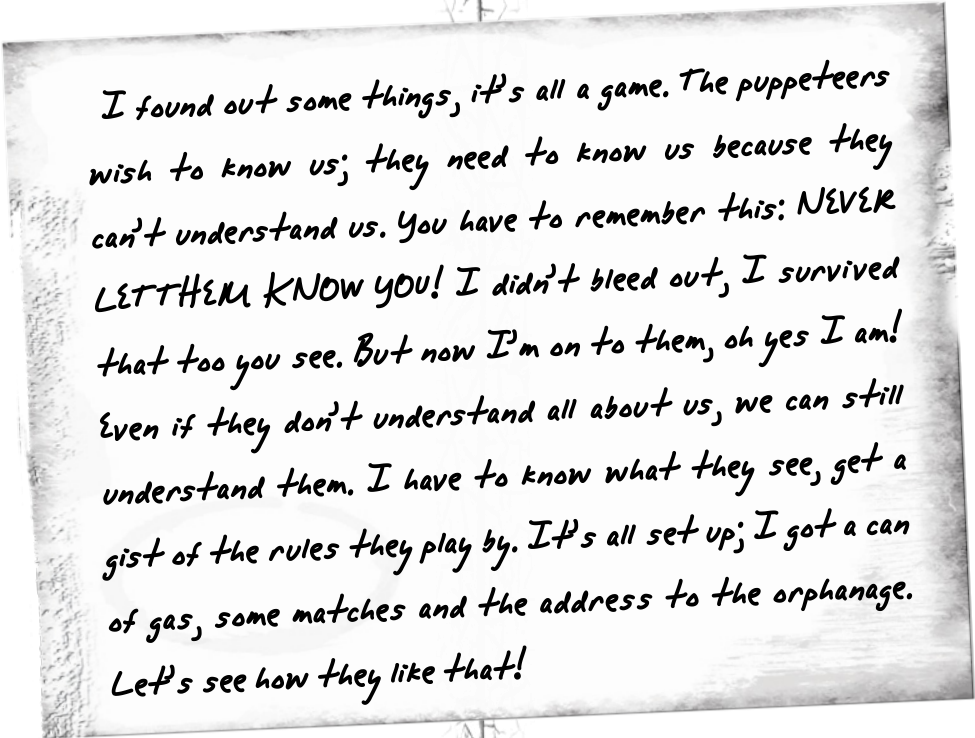
FYI

Magic and psychic abilities are quite powerful and you need to relay this to the player. Characters with the gift should respect their power and the player should play a gifted character with restraint and levelheadedness. If a player uses his character's power constantly without thinking of the consequences he has it wrong. Gifted never do needless things with their power in order to impress and it is likely they will go to great lengths to conceal their true natures from the other characters in the beginning of their relationship. See to it that a player never uses his abilities to bully the other characters just for the hell of it. Sure, if another character constantly pisses off a bokor voodoo priest or a pyrokinetic they will reap it indeed, but never let a player use his character's abilities over slights just because he can.

Come up with your own rituals and psychic abilities if you want to, just see to it that they don't skew the balance of the game. Set a reasonable aspect and base cost

corresponding with the power to make them fair. In the end, it is all about having fun and you may use this chapter as you see fit in order to weave your stories to perfection.

The cost is quite high for some rituals and powers, and the time it takes to regenerate essence is quite slow. This is deliberate. Having a slow essence build-up and a rather high essence cost when using powers discourages players somewhat from overusing them. If they could take advantage of them often and without having to think about the cost (or consequences of the aspects) the whole thing could get out of hand. This lets the player feel a bit of what his character feels, an unwillingness to squander his gift. But if you wish to have more freedom in this department you may just increase the amount of essence a character may recover each day.



I found out some things, it's all a game. The puppeteers wish to know us; they need to know us because they can't understand us. You have to remember this: NEVER LET THEM KNOW YOU! I didn't bleed out, I survived that too you see. But now I'm on to them, oh yes I am! Even if they don't understand all about us, we can still understand them. I have to know what they see, get a gist of the rules they play by. It's all set up; I got a can of gas, some matches and the address to the orphanage. Let's see how they like that!

CHAPTER 17

THE STORYTELLER

From: Special Agent Daniel Smyth

To: Assistant Director Lenora Markham

Our original investigation focused on Lisa Huxley. She is suspected of robbing a federal reserve armored truck back in 2012 in New York. However, as the investigation progressed it mushroomed, leading to Caleb Masseck, a.k.a Antiviral, a known hacker, Victor Legard, ex-police detective fired after a corruption scandal, Silak Theolonius, known antiques smuggler and Olivia Lake, freelance journalist. Miss Lake seems to be the only one without any priors.

All of the subjects, with the exception of Victor Legard, have vanished without a trace. We did however find sixteen pages of Olivia Lake's diary as well as some audio from her camcorder. The information contained within the pages (which I've scanned in and attached to this mail) is quite bizarre and our forensic psychologist speculates that Olivia Lake suffers from some kind of psychotic disorder. She seems to have worked with Huxley and the other persons of interest to our investigation. It is difficult to discern the nature of their cooperation and their activities, as the diary entries are rather disjointed and filled with delusional rants. Our surveillance teams and investigators have not been able to locate any of the individuals for two months, except Victor Legard who is still confined to a mental institution diagnosed with psychosis. However, Frank Deckard was found shot to death in his home and it appears that the events described by Miss Lake did take place (we found four human bodies hacked to bits in his kitchen).

We also found the knife allegedly used on the woman described as inhuman and shot by Silak early on in the notes in a cabin outside Albany, one rented by Silak Theolonius.

It is also interesting that the notes mention Blake & Ames and the DEA as we have found indications that a small corrupt group of federal agents have been doing illegal legwork off the books for Blake & Ames. This is pure conjecture at this time. As erratic as the notes are, I would like to be given at least one more month to investigate these incidents.

Regards,

Special Agent Daniel Smyth.

This chapter deals with storytelling and describes different ways to run a game. Character development through experience points will also be dealt with. The storyteller has a lot to keep track of but this will often become second nature.

Every dark corridor, every blood churning dark one, every enticing femme fatale, every coincidence, puzzle and mystery, is represented by the storyteller. He is the worst enemy and the best friend the players will ever have when they are lurking in the shadows of the Noctum game universe as their characters. It is a dirty job but someone always loves to do it.

Note: Some parts are as much for the players as for the storyteller to some degree. You have to decide which part (and if) you wish players to read.

WHO SHOULD KNOW WHAT?

This differs from one group of gamers to another. Some hate to know the secrets of a game. Others don't care, while some will have a problem separating what they know about the game from what their character knows. If you want to have one storyteller or if you wish to rotate the position from story to story is something you should discuss in the group.

RULES & SECRETS

The rules are always up for interpretation and most storytellers change some rules and make up several house rules of their own design. This is as it should be. Every storyteller has his own personal preference. But when changing rules the players should be told. They also have to agree; if they are skeptical towards a certain change you could compromise, testing the new rule in a story to see how it pans out.

When a story is ongoing there should never be any bickering over the rules. If a player notices that something is off he should of course inform the storyteller, who in most cases will appreciate the heads up if he made a mistake, but it should never lead to a discussion when playing. Bickering over modifiers and such is going to ruin the game and if a player wishes to discuss rules he should make a note and wait until the game session is done.

If a group of players wish to stay oblivious of the secrets of the game they should definitely do so, but the storyteller should explain the basic game mechanics. Players have to be able to discern how the system works, be privy to the rules concerning their fate pool and know how health and mentality work to some degree. They have to be able to monitor their characters' and have an idea of their chances in succeeding with tests.



TIME IN GENERAL

In a role-playing games time is handled in different ways depending on the situation. When several dreary hours pass by in the game universe (such as when the characters drive long distances) the time is compressed. If nothing of consequence happens during the trip the storyteller describes the trip in brief.

When characters engage in dialog the time flows in real time, pausing briefly sometimes if a player wants to ask something out of character. When actions and dice rolling are involved time often shifts (see combat and basic mechanics).

EMBRACING THE INNER KID

This book, as well as any other role-playing game of horror, is useless if the players aren't *willing* to scare the hell out of themselves. When playing a horror game you have to allow yourself to become scared. Think of it as a voluntary emotional reversed evolution; in some respects you have to become a kid again, preferably one that is scared of the dark.

Most horror games are played by grownups (or at least young adults) and let's face it, they don't get scared just because a storyteller describes something horrible, unless they allow themselves to.

You should embrace the feeling of being scared, that's kind of the point of playing horror. Forget you are all grown up and don't believe in monsters under the bed, put some of your rationale aside and jump right in there.

What scared you as a kid? Whatever it was, try and use it when playing the game. Some have a hard time with this because they might feel a bit uncomfortable acting out or showing this side to a group but if you are surrounded by people you trust and respect, who in turn trust and respect you, there shouldn't be a problem.

HURT ME GODDAMNIT!

The storyteller isn't the adversary of the players in any way; no one is looking to win. It is about cooperation. You are a team and should help each other to build up the mood and feel of the game when playing. For this, the players have to be willing to let their characters get into trouble.

Players have a real task ahead of them; they have to contradict their own rationale. This is a horror game and in these there tend to be a lot of nasty things that you will do well to stay the hell away from. Players know this, their characters do not.

Characters have a life (however miserable it may be), a job of some sort, relatives and acquaintances. In all this, weird things start to happen. Since the players are playing in order to get scared, and to experience the game world through their characters, it would make no sense for them to try to avoid the perils of the dark. The players have to help the storyteller do his job. They cannot avoid situations that might lead to trouble. Of course, if they avoid trouble by staying in character (the character has a particular insight that makes him avoid something) that is okay.

For example: A character receives a letter written on a moldy old piece of paper, which is from an old friend that has been missing (and maybe he is even presumed dead). The letter is somewhat cryptic and desperate in tone, begging the character to come to the little town of Rivers End because the character is the only one that may help him, maybe even save his life. The character would probably be worried and somewhat befuddled, and would in all likelihood want to help his old friend. The player on the other hand would be thinking: *"Rivers End, even the name sounds ominous. Hmm, there's probably something nasty that will kill my character there and I have all these experience points invested. No, I won't go"*. Well, that would be out of character and totally uninspired on the player's part.

Try to enjoy the game for what it is. The *character* is one person and the *player* is another person altogether, who tries to portray the character. A player should never avoid situations using information and notions based on what he knows, only act on what the character knows, thinks, and feels. So in other words, the players need to provide the storytellers with the opportunity to kick their characters' asses on a regular basis. What is the point of playing a horror game if the players try to rescue their characters from the game itself?

TAKE IT ALL AWAY!

Action can be an integral part of horror. Violence, and especially deadly violence, can be something horrific indeed. But many times less is more, at least when it comes to the characters' ability to fight back or bring down the horrors plaguing them. So at times, you should strip them of their weapons and resources, making them very vulnerable. You can still provide them with some small means of defending themselves. Having them find a rusty revolver with a box containing only ten shots will make them much more careful. And instead of giving them a heavy duty flashlight, you drop them down in the darkness with little else than their smart phone. If they are allowed to constantly carry their combat shotgun under their coat and a gym bag of shells, they won't feel as exposed. Even so, a gunfight and even all-out war can have their place in bolstering tension as well. Talk to your players and find a good balance between vulnerability and fighting back.

THRILL'EM, NOT KILL'EM

Noctum is a game written around the concept that characters should survive for a while. Sure, there is more than one critter in the Minion chapter that would indicate otherwise, but characters are meant to last. There is really no fun in having to generate a new character after each game session. Suspense is a powerful tool and having the character last beyond three or so stories will create this.

If a player has a new character every other time he really doesn't have an attachment to that character. Sure, the player has generated him but that's it. What if a player has had the same character for, oh lets say ten stories? The player has invested a lot of time in the character; he has gotten to know him. He has knowledge of a wide range of allies and foes, who have been popping up in several stories. Further more, he has thwarted a conspiracy and is now sought after by unknown forces. Will the player have any attachment to *this* character? Indeed he will, and he will certainly feel suspense when the character is in trouble.

First of all, if a group of players have survived for a while the social dynamics between the characters will be very well defined. They actually know each other. This allows for great role-play with many twists and turns. Secondly, it is much easier for the storyteller to tell a story with a group who has made a lot of enemies and allies.

Then there is the psychological aspect of the player. A player isn't likely to care as much what happens to a new character but will definitely try to avoid getting a seasoned character killed. Characters who have experienced some of the hidden horrors in Noctum will become more careful and a player who wants the character to survive will be careful as well. In this way they both evolve naturally alongside one another. Still, he has to stay in character (actually getting into trouble) and this will become more exciting. This is the paradox all players face in a horror game.

Characters can certainly die, and will do so from time to time (especially if they rush into things and aren't careful), but it is unnecessary to create situations where they constantly die. When a player starts to bring three extra characters to a game session just to be certain he has enough for the entire story, you should probably ease down on that whole "feeding characters to the darkness" bit just a tad. If your group on the other hand like to have a high mortality rate of characters you can go right ahead: Thrill'em and Kill'em if that is the case.

THEME

Every story has a theme of some sort. Themes can often be summarized in a sentence or two, but can contain a lot. The theme often decides what kind of ambience you wish to introduce into a story and can read very much like a

headline. Some examples of themes can be: *The desperation of poverty, the corruption of the modern church, perils of forgotten and hidden dark lore, the iron grip of organized crime.* A theme is always a good starting point and may be used to weave the story. The storyteller uses the theme as a foundation for the whole story and plotline. Once a theme has been established it is much easier to develop a story around it. However, the types of characters that are involved sometimes guide what kind of theme the storyteller may use.

Example: *Anders is going to write a story for Noctum. He tries to come up with a theme. This is the first story and he has two players, also first-timers. He wants the theme to be creepy with hints of hidden darkness but doesn't want to actually involve the dark ones directly from the start. Anders wishes to introduce the hidden world slowly.*

He comes up with the theme "cult influence and indoctrination" and from here he starts to build his story. The theme popped up in his head when he remembered an article about the Order of the Solar Temple he read a couple of weeks ago (a cult involved in mass murders and suicide).

He decides to come up with his own cult, one that doesn't have any real occult power or connections with the dark ones, they are just plain crazy and twisted. As he continues he decides that someone the characters know have a troubled kid. The kid has joined a cult. The parents cannot do much since their daughter is eighteen years old and may decide where she wants to live on her own; this also means that the cops cannot do anything. The cult is rumored to be involved in crime and the underground pornographic industry but nothing has been proven. The worried parents will contact the characters and ask for their help. One character is a Branch 94 agent and the other is a frantic reporter. Anders thinks that they, beyond wanting to help their friends, have a personal or at least a job related reason to get involved.

SETTING

The setting is very important. Where does the story take place and how does it look? The world of Noctum is very much like our own and is basically identical when it comes to geography. You may set the story in your very own hometown if you like. Every city and community has a dark alley, gloomy patch of forest, boarded up old house or run down factory. What would these places be like in the world of Noctum? What do they hide?

Overlapping fiction with reality, mixing it with urban legends and the hidden darkness of Noctum, is a very good way to build up a setting. If you want to you can invent your own cities and communities. Make use of everything around you in order to build your setting. Your own town, video games, books, movies and whatever else that could add to the setting may be introduced to create gloomy and interesting surroundings.

If the players arrive in a town you could just describe it as such: *"You drive down the main road of the small community",* but this doesn't say anything about the place. You need to describe details in order to give the players a notion of what the place is like: *"The road is uneven from cracks and the wheel swerves slightly in your grip. The veneer of most building along the main street seems to have peeled off, a sure sign of neglect. You drive by a bar, the windows are boarded up but you can clearly see the sign on the door, "Open for business". The town is supposed to have a population of about one thousand. You have your doubts."*

Smells, lights, sounds and physical appearance of a place can go a long way to describe a setting. You should never overdo it and describe things all the time in great detail, this will just become annoying, but you should always try to describe the most pivotal aspects when introducing a new and important setting, such as a town.

Example: *Anders has set the main theme of the story, now he needs a setting. He wants the characters to be isolated and feel as outsiders. Therefore he finds it prudent to create a small backwater town, hundreds of miles from the characters' hometown.*

He starts to think of a name. After a while he names it "Cinder Lake".

Anders decides that Cinder Lake used to be a prosperous little town in the mid-90s. They had an ore refinery and a lucrative mine. When the mine dried up at the end of the 90s a depression took hold. Most lost their jobs and many moved. Some who stayed could never adapt and it was a hard time. A lot of buildings have been abandoned and boarded up. In the outskirts of town the rundown refinery is located. Little is done to keep up the maintenance and the whole place looks like it's falling apart. The actual lake is located deep in the forest. This is the outline of the setting where the story will be played out.

AMBIENCE

It is important that you describe the scenes in a way that entices the players and sets the ambience. The world of Noctum is very dark and ominous, and this should be noticed, even when the characters go about their everyday lives.

Describe poverty, rundown slums and bizarre murders that are reported over the radio. If they drive past a dark alley (that actually has nothing to do with the main story) you can tell the player that the character suddenly remembers that a kid he went to school with disappeared after she walked down the alley on a dare. Little things like these go a long way to create mood and ambience of a morose nature.

Have them notice weird stuff of a macabre nature from time to time. Maybe they notice something strange when riding the elevator in their apartment building: *"Floor six? I thought this was a five story building."* Of course, when they push the button nothing will happen (or will it?). Having these kinds of weird things pop up from time to time will introduce a feeling that something is...well, *wrong*. Be careful, you don't want to distract the players from the major plotline when introducing flavor. Use moderation.

What kind of ambience you are using depends greatly on what type of story you are telling. A story that circles around demons and Christian faith would benefit from having an ambience filled with religious symbols, sense of foreboding omens, and a "the end is near" kind of mood.

Symbols and how they are presented are very powerful tools as well. Take the cross for example, in a church it represents faith but if it is turned upside down people will

associate it with devil worshiping, Satanism and a black mass. But what if the cross is turned upside down in a church? Is that a sign of blasphemy or a tribute to St Peter? He asked to be crucified upside down, feeling unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as Christ. What of a large wooden cross on the banks of Mississippi? Is it the prelude to a meeting organized by racists or a sign of faith? As you see, one symbol holds many meanings depending on how and where it is represented and interpreted.

The setting also helps to build the ambience. In some cases the setting acts as the inspiration for the ambience and actually provides a guide on how to form the ambience.

Example: *Anders tries to think of an ambience for his story and he comes up with one focusing on claustrophobia, apathy, cover-ups and persecution. Those who live in the town are aware of the sect but do little about it, they mostly keep to themselves and the townsfolk don't want to make ripples on the water. They try to turn a blind eye most of the time. The townsfolk have become quite uncaring, many drink their life away and many scorn outsiders as most of them have proved to be bankers who wish to get their loans back, or people from the IRS. Many have debts as a result of losing their jobs. Anders adds another twist: the cult runs a small meth-lab for some big shots in the city, making them quite rich compared to many in Cinder Lake, and so they have helped some of the people with payments in return for favors. In other words, some people will frown upon outsiders that snoop around. The characters will be under intense scrutiny while visiting the town of Cinder Lake. Tails, veiled threats and badly played ignorance will be part of their experience in Cinder Lake.*

STORY COMPONENTS

So how do you write a story? First of all you have to understand that you only can provide a frame for a story, much of the story writes itself in play. The players will change the story a great deal, providing new twists and turns through their decisions and actions when portraying their characters. Basically, they will maim whatever you write with a chainsaw, cutting it up with blades of free will fuelled by a lust for gaming. This is a good thing (if not taken to the extremes by an overzealous player). The players should be able to change the story somewhat as everything they do will influence the game universe.

Still, you need to have a story to tell, with main NPCs, beginning, middle and a conclusion. These are strung along the plotline.

The plotline is important to establish and need only to start out as a few simple, but pivotal, components. Lets take a look at how Anders lays out the foundation for his plotline.

- **Beginning:** The characters are informed of what is going on: A kid is missing.
- **Middle:** The characters investigate the cult and try to find a way to get the kid out.
- **Conclusion:** They manage to get the girl out (or the cult wins, killing the characters or sends them packing).

This is a very simple outline of a story and plot, and it can be divided into even more parts in order to describe the story in additional detail. However, using three main “pillars” is a good way to start out. Anders fleshes out his story even more, adding details and more parts.

- **Part one:** They get a call from their friend. He is very desperate and explains what has happened. His daughter has joined a dangerous cult in a little place called Cinder Lake. As she is eighteen the cops cannot do anything about it. He needs their help.
- **Part two:** The characters go to Cinder Lake and start to investigate the cult. Soon they discover that the townsfolk are quite unfriendly, possibly even involved.
- **Part three:** After further investigation the cult tries to scare the characters off and they send three brutes to rough them up.
- **Part four:** After (and if) having overcome the brutes they can go straight to the source, the cult's den which is located in the old ore refinery, and they try to get the girl out. This information will be gleaned by interrogating the brutes.
- **Part five:** Either by using smarts and stealth or brute force they get the girl out (or are captured or killed by the cult).
- **Part six** (If they survived part five): The girl is basically brainwashed and they have to make the drive home without being stopped by a cop (as they have actually kidnapped her in the eyes of the law). If they succeed they return her to her parents who have hired a deprogrammer.

This is the outline of Anders' story and plot, but the actions of the players may change it a lot. What happens if the characters end up killing the two brutes and miss the chance to get hold of the information, or simply send them running? It is also possible that the frantic reporter gets wind of the ore refinery while doing research in the local library or when interviewing someone.

If this happens, Anders has to improvise during play. Maybe he comes up with a member of the cult who has been cast out and is looking for revenge and therefore helps the characters if they have missed out on information the brutes were supposed to provide. If the frantic reporter

busts into the refinery early in the game, Anders would allow her to do so. But then the cult might catch her and as a result a hostage situation evolve (will they indoctrinate her?), or she might witness horrible events and barely escape. In this case odds are that the cult will relocate (probably nearby though) and the characters have to widen the net of their search in order to find the girl. However it plays out it will still be exciting. When the players steer the story in a really exciting and interesting direction, Anders will let them and go with the flow. But the main components of the story as well as the clues remain intact: The cult has the girl, the townsfolk are still involved, and the same questions that need to be answered still remain.

PLOT TWISTS

A story should never be a straight line. It bends and twists in all kinds of ways. There are many ways to handle plot twists. The storyteller may have unexpected events turn the entire thing upside down, forcing the characters to regroup and rethink what they should do. Another way is to have a story run parallel with the main story.

Parallel stories may involve the characters themselves; when trying to solve a mystery the character may as well have to deal with things relating to their work or personal life. Some weaknesses such as Gatekeeper, Dark Presence, and Crossover, automatically supply a parallel story.

Example: Anders looks over his notes and decides to add a plot twist. The cult has hurt many people and now it seems they messed with the wrong one. A couple of months ago they sold drugs to a group of juvenile delinquents that were passing through. Hyped up on methamphetamine they ran a young couple off the road. Both died. The boy was the son of Aveline Cross, a voodoo Bokor. She managed to track down the responsible drivers and killed them using magic. By using her rituals Aveline has found out where the drugs came from and is currently in Cinder Lake with the intent of punishing the leader and his closest followers. Anders hasn't decided if she will help the characters or work against them, not willing to be deprived of her vengeance.

CHRONICLES

Chronicles (sometimes referred to as campaigns) are a series of interlinking stories that take several game sessions to complete. They can be totally flowing, picking up exactly where they left off, or each story can have an ending but adhere to a metaplot.

It takes much more time to write and put together a chronicle but they are very intriguing, and players tend to be inspired by them. In a chronicle each story can be seen as a part of a whole, very much like the episodes of a television series. The same principle goes when creating a chronicle as when creating a story, only the scale is much more grand. Ideas for chronicles often come to life when playing a story and the storyteller starts to construct them.

We are going to take another look at Anders and the two players. The characters managed to get the girl out and got her to her parents. A couple of days later Anders sits at home and has come up with some outlines for a chronicle involving Cinder Lake.

Example: *The vengeful Bokor, Aveline Cross, turned against the characters in the previous story and they ended up killing her. Anders decides that she was turned into an Ocul who wishes to act out her revenge on both the characters and the survivors of the sect. She is linked to a medallion, representing vengeance in the voodoo faith, which she dropped when one of the characters shot her. For starters she will begin to harass the characters, and she will unknowingly leave them clues to her identity and the medallion (which is still in Cinder Lake in a back alley). This will eventually lead the characters back to Cinder Lake.*

In the meantime, one of the surviving cult members is desperate. He mourns the death of his leader (whom Aveline Cross killed using magic) and the cult member has no idea where the leader stashed the drugs. Two enforcers have been sent from the mob in order to collect the drugs or kill the cult if they don't fess up. Anders calls this cult member Robin Holcomb. Robin is descending into madness as he mourns, wants revenge, and fears for his life. This, Anders decides, forms a dark prayer, heard by the Vaakal Jismanoth. Jismanoth sees potential in this off-the-beaten-path town and decides to make it an outpost of darkness. He brings forth a Spawn and subsequently sends it to Cinder Lake. The forces of the Harbingers have been lurking close to this place and wanting to please his master, Ahriman, Jismanoth wants the town for the betrayer's sake.

The Spawn starts to influence Robin and soon he bows under its power, promising eternal loyalty in exchange for the power needed to kill the enforcers and to avenge his former leader. Soon a spore infects him, slowly turning him into an Unholy Reverend. He plans to take over the entire town in due time. This constitutes the first notes of Anders' chronicle. The players will return and the surviving cult will be much stronger, and some of the townspeople will also be infected. They have to find the medallion in order to deal with the Ocul, and the mob will also be in Cinder Lake. In the actual lake the Spawn has settled and awaits its first human sacrifice promised by Robin. Anders smiles as he sees the potential of the chronicle.

Making it work: *The players have jobs, kids and a whole other bunch of responsibilities in real life. And it can be hard to free up any spare time. It is therefore recommended that you create an in game group in which the characters have a good and natural reason to "go missing" from time to time. This will help with keeping the game world feel immersive even if a player can't join a session. For example, if all the players work for a particular group (special taskforce, crime syndicate, private employer, etc.) you can have one of the characters being called away on a specific solo task if the player can't show up for a session. Or if the character has a fitting weakness he might be temporarily be taken out of the game as a result of it when a player can't show (off seeking vengeance, lost in a drug binge,*

or visiting a special sleep disorder clinic which might help with his nightmares). Players should never feel that a game session is a "must", it is a hobby and a game and therefore it is good to be able to employ this kind of system. It will allow players to miss a session without any real disruption to the game.

GETTING THEM THERE

In some role-playing games the characters are "adventurers" and a story may begin when someone asks them to do something for money, honor, or fame. In many other games, all characters are members of a group or organization that simply sends them out to investigate something. In Noctum, most characters differ greatly from one another, having nothing in common, and they are definitely *not* adventurers. Characters have to be sucked into a story in a way that is natural to them and the game universe. In the example above Anders used a rather easy, but not all to original, way to drag the characters into the story, but it works.

These kinds of openings are good to use when the characters don't know each other. With a mutual friend asking both of them to look into something they have a reason to cooperate and to get to know each other. When characters have become acquainted it becomes easier to involve them in a story. As they solve even more mysteries together they share even more, and odds are that they are going to pick up the phone if they need help, or come across something strange, as they know they can rely on the other person.

If you wish for a group of characters to be elite operatives and investigators that work together from the start you may have them working for Branch 94 or Styx not knowing the truth behind these organizations. This allows them to be sent out on investigations and missions with a clear goal and directives. If you are new to the concept of creating horror stories this makes it a whole lot easier to get them where you want.

HANDLING INVESTIGATIONS

When running stories which focus on investigations, it can be important to have a line of clues ready. The clues are vital in the solving of the mysteries, and so you will need a way to tie it all together.

Decide different places, people, sites and events that may reveal clues. Exactly how the clues are revealed differs but the use of several skills is usually implemented. So make good use of *key investigative scenes*. The main point of these scenes is to allow investigative progress to be made while employing the character's wits and the players' smarts. One scene leads to the next and will allow the story to progress naturally.

The players have to figure out which leads to follow, what skills to employ, and what to investigate on their own, thus allowing themselves to use their smarts as well. Clues can sometimes be directly connected to the leads or may be realizations and conclusions that have been inspired and brought together in the mind of the character by the following and solving of the leads that let them see parts of the big picture. This is an excellent way of moving a story forward without forcing it on the players. Always have in mind that characters that are skilled investigators are capable of picking up details that players may not. Never let a story centering on investigations come to a halt just because a player has a hard time to see things his character would see in an instance.

KEY INVESTIGATIVE SCENES & TRIGGERED EVENTS

When creating a story you can make use of key investigative scenes and triggered events as a story map. Key investigative scenes generate clues that are leads and realizations, which move the story forward, while triggered events are happenings that may be triggered by the finding of clues or a particular course of action, also moving the story forward. This system makes it easy to move between scenes and allow you to have a working script.

Players are never inside the game for real and this makes it much harder for them to see and find leads than it is for their characters. Key investigative scenes are a way to bestow the players with important information filtered through the insight and knowledge of their characters.

Sometimes characters will find clues in a different order than you expected, but this is okay. As the clues also give the characters and players a sort of realization from time to time, you may work in hints in clues that will lead the characters to the next one, even if the order has been scrambled.

For example, let's say you have one clue attached to a chemical plant. Information of the chemical plant is considered exhibit A. Clue number two, exhibit B, can be found on a body. Forensic analysis will show that the body had traces of the same chemicals that could be found in the chemical plant. What if events by chance made the characters find the body first before even hearing of the chemical plant? In this case you can drop a small "extra" on the players when they find the clue. Let one of the characters remember reading an article concerning the hazards of the local chemical plant, describing the very poison they have found, or maybe you would rather let them find a forensic trace which connects the victim to a certain geographic location (which of course is near the chemical plant) by unique soil composition or vegetation. There are all kinds of ways of getting players back on track in this way.



FORENSICS

The analysis of the stain had come up industrial freezer coolant and bovine blood. There was only one place that fit the bill: the Dover & Sons meat packing facility. Alex stopped the car and grabbed her forensics kit. It was about seven in the evening and the sun was setting, thick mist blanketing the scene. The air smelled of blood and dead meat as she approached the building.

This could explain how the killer had been able to keep the bodies fresh. Three victims so far, all had been killed in their homes. The blood at the scenes suggested as much, but the bodies had been found three months later in top condition. The unsub had placed them in different window displays in stores. He must have wrapped them tight, staving off freezer burns, and thawed them out in order to prop them up.

Alex headed into the alley between the fish market and the meat packing facility. She didn't have a warrant but the rear freezer unit was located on the back street, which was owned by the city. She rounded the corner and saw it. It hummed and rumbled. She walked around it, and there it was; a leakage, evidence in plain sight out in the open. She smiled as she knelt down and opened her case. She carefully took a sample and put it in a vial. If the coolant matched the sample they had back at the lab she could justify getting a warrant.

Rushing footsteps made her turn, startled. The masked man came out of the cold swirls of mist, his knife poised to strike. Alex went for her gun but he was too fast. His slash caught her across her right wrist. It cut through her thick coat and into her flesh. She dropped the gun but managed to kick him in the groin, which gave her time to turn and run. Her heart pounded, adrenaline rushing, blood dripping. She heard his footsteps right behind her.

Who the fuck knew that she had found the lead? She had only told her team back at the station and her contact in the FBI. None of them would breach the confidentiality of an investigation. Had someone tapped her phone? Even though she was running, jumping the chain-link fence, she grew cold. What if the would-be killer chasing her was in fact one of her own people? It seemed that the unsub had been one step ahead of them the entire time. Her lead had triggered something very dangerous and all she could do now was hope to survive long enough to uncover the truth. To her relief, she still clutched the vial in her left hand...



You can change around a lot of things, but stay true to the main components of the story. How the players go about finding the clues and how they solve them doesn't change the answers to them and the bad guy will still be the bad guy and so forth. These factors should be static, because changing these during play is messy at best. But the players have free rein when it comes to *how* they go about finding the answers. Think of it like this, you can cross a bridge in a number of ways. You could run across it, crawl, walk, climb under it, or drive over it. Probably you will use the method you find most appealing, but that doesn't change the fact that the bridge is a bridge, and will remain so no matter how you cross it. You can even jump off the bridge, and then it will take some time and effort to get back. This in itself can be interesting. But if you tear down the actual bridge, it becomes a mess and would not be of much use to anyone. The players should be allowed to explore the plot, come up with various ways to change the flow and order of the plot and story, but they cannot change the main components.

Triggered events are more hands on and can be everything from an overt attack to an important dialogue. Important events are often happenings prepared in advanced that are put into motion by certain actions on the part of the characters. Let's go back to the example above. The characters have found the chemical plant and the victim, connecting the two. They go to the plant to investigate and talk to the manager. This will trigger an event. The manager is in on the murder and after becoming nervous as a result of the characters little visit he calls his co-conspirators. The manager wishes to get out of the deal but his co-conspirators won't have it. As they fear that the manager is a weak link they send someone to kill him. Knowing what kind of people he's dealing with, the manager calls the characters, wishing to blow the whistle on the whole operation if they promise to give him protection and keep the cops out of it. As he's on the phone he tells them some minor things but is killed before he can expose the entire thing. The call and the murder of the manager was an event triggered by the findings of the clues. His death, and the small specks of information he was able to divulge before he died, will lead the characters to even another key investigative scene that eventually will trigger further events. Sketching out clues, triggers and events can be a very good way to get an overview of your story.

However, there is some work involved. You always have to create several forks in the road and see to it that your trail (and the general layout of the story) doesn't become all to narrow. Players should never feel that they only have one precise way to go about solving mysteries. You should also have various NPCs, locations, key investigative scenes, and sometimes even various endings in place. Preparing in this way (i.e. stocking up on alternatives) lets the decisions of the players really affect the story without leaving you high and dry. If you connect the character's motivation (background, personality traits, weaknesses, loved ones,

goals etc) to the plot, and if the players do a good job of portraying their characters, you seldom run into any trouble in this department. In this case the characters (and the players) will follow the trails quite naturally since they have an underlying motivation to do so. If you are new to role-playing and storytelling it might take some tries to get it right, but in due time you will get the hang of it, adding it to your "storyteller lore".



MECHANICS VS BRAINS: A QUESTION OF TASTE

When using the investigation system you have to decide how much of the work the characters (getting realizations and such) should do and how much of it that falls upon the players. Most players won't be forensic experts or crime scene investigators in real life, and even if they were they would still have a hard time noticing details in the game since they cannot actually see what their characters see. The players have to use the skills of their characters to actually pick up the clues but the players themselves should always get a chance to interpret the findings on their own.

If the characters find a stain of brake fluid on the floor close by a murder victim and take a sample of it, this in itself would not mean much. But if a person of interest in the investigation turns out to work as a car mechanic it would suddenly mean a whole lot more. Now the clue has been put into context. The characters skills were used to actually find it but the players now have to interpret the clue on their own, following the lead.

In this case, you should never confuse the clues with the solution. Clues are things that the players may obtain by using the resources of their characters and they make out pieces of a puzzle. Putting together these pieces is the job of the players, who has to use their own smarts to do it. When all falls into place they will have the solution.



ANTAGONISTS & ALLIES

The non-player characters are extremely important. They have to be believable, have depth, and add to the story. NPCs inspire role-play since the characters often will interrogate them, talk to them and relate to them in a number of ways.

Some NPCs are more crucial than others. Close friends, immediate family, main antagonists and allies are the types of people that need to be detailed to some extent. You don't have to write down stats for NPCs that aren't going to need them. The character's nine-year-old kid would have to be detailed in personality but it would be totally unnecessary to give him stats since these would not be of any importance to the story. A crazed serial killer that has it in for the characters would do best with stats since he is likely to need them in a confrontation, or when he tries to outsmart the characters. The same goes for close allies that

are actively partaking in the story (backing them up in a shootout, helping them hack into a computer system etc) by using their skills and aptitudes.

Less important NPCs such as henchmen, waitresses and similar people should have a personality as well. Never play them the same way; this would create an environment of cardboard extras, and quite frankly, it would diminish the entire experience of the game.

THEY HAVE A LIFE

Always remember that NPCs aren't without background, they aren't born as a whole person. If dealing with hostile humans and defiled that try to kill the characters you should always see to it that they don't have a death wish. If the characters confront a group of hostiles, subsequently shooting down most of them, the rest aren't likely to hang around. They don't want to die. Of course, there are some fanatical and crazed individuals that couldn't care less if they got shot but see to it that every hostile isn't unfazed by injury or the death of their allies.

HONEY, I'M HOME


Some of the characters will have a family and most will have co-workers and friends. It is essential that characters have a social network of some kind. Even if they have weaknesses that discourage most from hanging with them there is always someone that cares about them in one way or another.

Certain characters might not be able to have a social network for some reason or another but this shouldn't be the standard. If a character exists in a social vacuum it diminishes the horror somewhat. When they have a family, a job and friends, it becomes all too clear how they are affected by the horrors they experience. As mentality drops those close to them will notice the change and confront them about it. Soon they stand to lose their loved ones, their job, and through that they risk becoming homeless as well. The game doesn't focus on the family life as such but it can be quite dramatic to have a family and social life in the background.

CHARACTERS NOT PLAYERS

It is important that you make the players actually play their characters. Engage them in conversations with NPCs. They shouldn't be allowed to say: "My character asks doctor Harker if he wrote the essay". They should ask the good doctor in character. Dialogs are important, without social interaction the game turns quite stale and lackluster.

Have them role-play fear, anger, sorrow and pain. When they get shot they should emulate this through role-play. Make sure that you don't disturb, or even worse, freak out



the neighbors. If a player gets really involved in his role-play and screams, *"Oh, my god, the bastard stabbed me! I'm bleeding out, help me goddamnit!"* and the neighbors hear it (not having a clue as to what is actually going on) they might call the police. The hobby of role-playing has been stigmatized throughout the years by misinformed ignorant finger-pointers of the highest caliber, especially the horror genre. So see to it that you don't freak out your neighbors (or anyone else for that matter).

UNRAVELING THE COIL

The Coil is a very potent tool and can be used to create astonishing scenes of the horribly fantastic and dramatic. You have to find your own way to describe the realms and what it looks like when our world twists into parts of the Coil. Sometimes a room may start to change. The wallpaper crumbles, tiles fall off, dark patches of decay spread from the inside out, turning the wall into a mosaic of putridity. In the end the characters have been transported to the deep gloom of the hidden world.

How you describe it may vary, no gate or distortion is the same. In some cases it is as easy as walking through a door. There are no set rules regarding when and how the Coil may appear, and you have absolute control over this. Realms of the Coil needn't be extreme. For example, some Sites of Sickness are almost abandoned; this means that it is a large and shadowy network of empty hospital corridors from which there is no apparent escape. This environment alone is unnerving. Whenever you need a certain realm you should just construct it. You have limitless options on how to design the outline and structure of these places.

MINIONS

When using creatures you should always take care in deciding when and how you make them appear. It would not be fair to dump an Alsekthaal in the characters' lap without any means of escape. This would kill the characters for sure.

Most half-breeds and every full blood can crush a human with little effort. You should always keep this in

mind. Balance the situation, number of characters and the overall circumstances before having a monstrosity jump the characters. Also try to visualize the scene you are trying to create. Do you want it to be a showdown or is the creature only there to scare them off? Do you wish the minion to hunt the characters or stalk them from a distance, unnerving them slowly before appearing? And most importantly: Why is the creature after the characters in the first place?

A bloodthirsty unbound half-breed is prone to attack or harass humans since this is their very nature, but a Wossal that is in the service of Ahriman or the Harbingers would not risk exposure just to attack because it wanted to. It is important that the minions have a reason to interact with the characters. Try not to toss all kinds of dark ones at the characters at random, figure out why they are there. Most creatures are described in such a way that it is rather easy to come up with situations and circumstances where they might show up.

If characters are in the Coil it is a whole other story. In this world few creatures hesitate to bring down a human. There is no risk of exposure and they do their master a service by slaying humans who wander off into their domain.

You should definitely create your own creatures. Many unbound are unique, only existing in small numbers as they have been spawned by a particular incident to represent the evil and suffering of man. Think about what spawned them and give them abilities, appearance and proclivities to match their reason for being.

Example: *The characters survived and solved the chronicle Anders created for them and he is now preparing another story. He wants the story to be particularly harrowing, and has decided that the characters are going to interview a serial killer who is locked up in a maximum-security prison for the criminally insane. The prison is going to be decommissioned soon and there are only a few criminals left.*

One of the guards is actually a fan of the serial killer and for years he has provided the killer with access to other prisoners and watched as he killed them. The prison is old and there has always been a small weak distortion in the area, created during all the years of human suffering. This distortion has grown and is now capable of morphing the entire prison into a dreadful Nether of Nightmares that is an even darker version of the place (He's using the Morose Miroir style of play, see below).

Anders has decided to create a unique half-breed, spawned by the suffering and scorn of the killed prisoners. The killer usually tortures his victims by slashing them with razor blades after which he electrocutes them in different ways. First Anders decides that the creatures will have rusted and broken off razor blades sticking out from their torn skin. They are also going to have small iron rods, teeming with electric current, penetrating their flesh. Around these the skin constantly fizzles and bubbles, spreading the revolting stench of burning human skin and hair. This is his first draft and he will develop them even further and give them aptitudes and proclivities suiting to the story. They

want vengeance and to instill fear. They will slowly begin to stalk the characters, not revealing themselves at first.

He plans for the characters to become caught in the distorted version of the prison and stalked by the creatures. To survive they have to find and slay the killer, as well as the sadistic guard. As they have no idea what is going on they have to discover vital clues to understand how they will be able to save themselves and find those responsible in the maze-like facility.

MENTALITY

Characters will struggle with inner turmoil as they are broken down in spirit. You have to adapt stories somewhat according to their state of mind and also use care when you subject the characters to mental stress. Always try to have an idea of how mentally straining a story might be. There is no way of telling this exactly but if you have included several mind shattering relics, tomes of dark myth and creatures it would probably mean that some of the characters might end up in a straitjacket at the end of the story.

Driving characters mad may be part of the whole thing. Always try to think beforehand. If you wish to tell a sick and utterly insane story, in which the main idea is to send characters to twisted realms, the story would probably benefit from a group of broken down and mentally unstable characters, not being able to tell madness apart from reality. If you on the other hand want to play one or several stories involving mysteries, conspiracies and investigations you should be somewhat restrained when it comes to dishing out the madness. This kind of story would require characters that are somewhat functional and coherent. It is all about what you want out of a story.

In downtimes between game sessions, more time may pass by in the game world. During this period a character (if not too messed up) will regain some psyche points. If the character is seeing a shrink (or is institutionalized) you should make rolls for the weeks he gets treatment.

WEAKNESSES

Weaknesses are very important and you should always know what weaknesses the characters have. The easiest thing is to write them down, along with their level and insight. This way you have a total overview of the weaknesses and may activate them or remind the players of them when they come into play.

A storyteller should always have the weaknesses of the characters in mind when constructing a story. For example, it would be quite an oversight to have a scene played out in a morgue or graveyard and moving on without incident, if one of the players had the weakness crossover at a severe level. Know the weaknesses, let them affect the story and come into play. They are a pivotal part of what Noctum is all about.

Weaknesses can be used to motivate characters into going in a certain direction. Someone driven by a blind yearning for vengeance would jump at the opportunity to exact that revenge, and a character that suffers from harrowing nightmares would do everything in his power to get rid of them. The weaknesses themselves can act as a motivator for characters to get themselves involved in the dark world of the game, quite naturally.

DARKNESS, TAKE MY HAND

It is possible that you wish to run a story or campaign where the characters are quite evil, or indulge in extremely loathsome acts on a regular basis. Maybe you find the concept of them being members of a sect intriguing, or you might want to explore what it is like to run a game when one of the players is a serial killer. Well, this is quite possible but you have to be careful to not overdo it.

A story involving characters that are through-and-through evil, without any redeeming qualities or an ounce of empathy or human emotions can become...well, juvenile, if done wrong. Going around killing, scheming and torturing just for the hell of it will become quite lacklustre and without any depth. If you decide to play a story emphasizing on evil individuals or gruesome acts the characters should have some kind of counterbalance to their dark side or a motive. It is much scarier to play someone who tries to fight off the urges than someone who goes around hacking up people with a psycho smile and a fuzzy sense of content. At the very least they should have a goal of some sort.

Example (The Unwilling Serial Killer): *The storyteller has created a new story that focuses on one particular character. This character is by all intents and purposes a serial killer, but he doesn't want to be one. His name is William Baker, a software developer, and he was born with the uncanny ability to spot evil (particularly stains of evil). He has three young children, all of them are destined to commit unspeakable acts (we are talking genocide of the highest level), but only if a certain amount of evil influences corrupts them. Some stains of evil, it seems, searches for these children in order to slither their way into their souls, fulfilling their destiny. The problem is that the stains hide inside innocent people most of the time and can only be destroyed if the victim is killed by ritual sacrificing using ancient arch-glyphic systems, which entails mutilations and degradation of the victims. Poor mister Baker, who lives with his unsuspecting children and loving wife, can spot and identify this evil and knows when someone carries it around. He doesn't wish to kill his children but neither does he want them to become evil incarnate. He has to watch for those who carry the stains and then take care of them intricately, painfully and terminally. Basically he is a neurotic software developer by day and an unwilling serial killer by night. Baker is a good man (but of late becoming quite disturbed) and is going to be forced to kill innocents (as well as the odd bastard who deserves it). As the story develops he has to balance his love for his family against the grisly reality of his situation and the*

insanity that has begun to fester in his mind. What will he do if a friend shows signs of a stain, or a co-worker, or (heaven forbid) himself? But then again, what if he is just plain crazy and all that he believes to be true is part of his illness? The player won't even know if his character really can see evil or not. He only knows what the storyteller has told him.

BRAIN SURGERY WITH A PIPE WRENCH

That doesn't sound too smart now does it? Well, performing brain surgery with a pipe wrench will be as effective as trying to toss the wrong kinds of characters into the wrong type of story. When you create a story you should do so with the characters in mind; hell, the story should be written to fit the characters. Not doing so is like writing a script disconnected from the very characters it is all about.

If a group of players consist of a private investigator, a horror writer and a book detective, you shouldn't tell a story centering on violence and gore. Investigations, puzzles, research and mysteries should be the focus of the story. Sometimes it fits to have violent things happen to these kinds of characters but if the story centers totally on violence, the players would not have fun. If they play intellectual characters that have no real fighting skills it would be quite boring to be tossed into an ultra-violent story.

It is the same thing if a group of players have generated characters that focus on violence. How the hell is someone that mostly has combat-oriented skills going to solve an ancient Babylonian cipher, or collect evidence from a crime scene? Most of the time the characters will be a diverse lot, having a lot of different skills divided between them.

The most important thing is that players feel that their characters have something useful to add to the development of the story. They have to be able to use their skills to make progress. Sure, they are going to run into problems they cannot solve but then they might use one of their contacts or whatnot, in order to solve it. The characters are the main protagonists and it would be quite boring if they couldn't affect the story by using their skills and smarts. It is fairly simple, if a player has created a detective type character you can assume that he wants to detect.

CREATING HORROR

Noctum is all about horror and it is a joint effort between the players and the storyteller to create the mood of horror. The most important thing when storytelling the genre is timing. It is essential. How to make use of timing is very hard to explain as it differs greatly depending on the players and type of story.

Build-ups are one of the key elements when creating good timing. It is very much like a roller coaster with ups and downs. Players need some calm moments and some hectic ones. They need to feel safe as well as become rattled. A storyteller has to be able to gauge events to get the most out of it. To have the unexpected happen is always a good tool. But to be able to pull this off a storyteller has to change his “storytelling pattern”.

Most storytellers have a pattern. This has nothing to do with their stories as such. Even if a storyteller creates unique stories every time his pattern for telling a story will probably remain. It isn't very strange that players get to know how their storyteller tells a story, but this also means they have some idea of the pattern. For example, some storytellers may be more prone to have people the characters trust betray them, or have them rely on vital clues most of the time. The players will start to recognize this. Because of this a storyteller should always take a moment to think about elements that are similar in their otherwise diversely dissimilar stories. If the pattern constantly changes the players cannot fall back on any kind of familiarity in order to guide them through the story. They will be as confused as their characters. Now the storyteller may create all kinds of ups and downs that the players cannot predict in any way. This makes it possible to time frightful moments and revelations in an unpredictable and dramatic fashion.

When creating horror you can make use of all kinds of tools. You should never lay it out before the players in a neat package as such, describing every grisly detail. Give them enough to imagine for themselves, their vision of the horrific will be far worse since they use concepts they find disturbing and scary to fill in the blanks.

Then there is the practical part. You should always try to play in an environment that adds to the mood. Sitting on a warm and sunny beach playing Noctum would not really do the trick. A room lacking any strong lights is preferable and candlelight is always a hit. Be careful when using candles, as a table often is filled with papers and books during a game session. Then there is music. Some like it, others do not, but having a scary ambient music playing in the background (or just eerie sounds) can be quite effective. Soundtracks from movies and videogames within the genre often provide excellent scores.

PROPS

Props are a very good way to make a game feel full of life. There are different kinds of props you may use to get the desired effect. One of the easiest is to fabricate documents that look old and tattered. These can be used when the characters find pages from an old diary, parchments of ancient lore and old letters. There are some methods that are good for constructing these props. If you use the methods for “aging” paper you should take care when using the oven or candles. When you have a paper in the oven you should watch the process all the time, as paper is flammable after all. Take the necessary precautions.

ANCIENT DOCUMENT 101

First of all you need to find a good pen since you have to write the text on the paper before the “aging process”. This makes it look more natural as the ink becomes stained and somewhat smudged as well. Writing after the ageing makes the text look too fresh and it stands out. A good pen to use is a felt-pen with a thin tip. The ink (or whatever they fill them with) tends to hold up good when submerged in liquid. Scribble some letters on a paper and dip it in water just to be sure. It would be very frustrating to write a whole page to find that it becomes unreadable after it has been submerged.

Then you should get hold of a suiting paper. Most papers will do as long as they aren't glossy. Pour in some hot water and mix in some coffee, tea, or both. Ground coffee often makes for a more spotted paper while instant coffee gives a more even hue. If you want a more controlled tinge you may add soy sauce bit by bit.

Submerge the paper in the liquid, and let it stew for a minute or so. Get rid of the water and then put the document in the oven. Make sure to lift the paper from the pan first and then put it back so it doesn't get stuck after it is dry. Watch the paper carefully as it dries. The temperature in the oven mustn't be too high.

You can char the edges with a candle (be careful and take the necessary precautions) to make it look even more tattered and use wadded paper dipped in coffee to add dark spots and such. Another good way to make the edges tattered is to take a needle or something and tear at them carefully when wet. Well, that is the basics for making “ancient” documents.

GOING SHOPPING

Some stores, especially second-hand stores, may hold trinkets that may be used as props. If a psychic is investigating a murder it is quite cool if the storyteller can produce a locket or other thing belonging to the “victim”.

You can find all kinds of useful things you may use as props. If you are running a story focusing on profiling and murder scenes you should pick up a file or two that the players can use as a murder book, keeping all vital clues and such. Soon they will have a file filled with autopsy reports, notes, newspaper clippings and all manner of things they can use to solve the case. With very little effort you can instill a very intense mood by using props.

AUTOPSY REPORTS

The minions of darkness are often capable of killing a human in ways that defy logic, or at least stretch the boundaries of known medical science. Beyond that, most

creatures leave behind telltale signs on bodies, a blood-chilling and ghastly vestige of their fleeting presence.

What would the body of someone fallen victim to a Chainer look like? Marks made by chains, which have ripped the very skin from the body? Defensive wounds and traces of abuse might be present, but there would be no identifiable DNA. Where could he have been found? Hanging from the wall by his feet five stories up?

An autopsy report alone is enough to get the characters rattled and drawn into a dreadful tale. In the end of the book, along with the Cast/NPC sheet and the characters sheet, a blank autopsy form is included. Take some copies and use them in your stories if you need to. Choose a creature and try to imagine how it kills. What would stand out? How does medical science try to explain it? In addition to this there is a personnel dossier, which you may use to create missing persons reports, APB's and all kinds of things. A dossier containing sparse information is a very good way to run a missing persons story. Slowly the characters will find more and more information and start to fill in the blanks and conduct research to find the individual.

ROLE-PLAY IN THE ROLE-PLAY

This isn't a physical prop as such but it is a mental one. When characters find old diary pages and documents that tell a story it is much more fun if they actually can be part of that story. What if they find a document involving a group of exorcists from the 1700s and they would actually be able to play through the thing they read about? Suddenly they are handed another character sheet, a quick back-story and a whole new character to play. They find themselves in the dirty and smelly back alleys of Enlightenment Paris, holding a flintlock pistol and a lantern. This is a very good way to make a story diverse and interesting.

When using this kind of technique it is important to understand that the players don't have as much control over the story when they portray these characters. They have to leave themselves much at the storyteller's mercy, but may still affect some of it. Some of these characters might be destined to die in the tale, while others are destined to survive. Another thing to have in mind is that they cannot know much more than may be learned by reading the actual document. A very cool way to make this work is if you use a physical prop, it is usually enough to write an introduction of a letter and present the characters and situation there, as the prelude. For example, the players are handed a tattered and stained letter. It begins something like this: *"It was the Year of Our Lord 1732, October first. We were walking down the darkened street. Our hearts felt heavy but we knew we had to end it; the creature's homestead was just around the corner.*

Acier, the stalwart soldier of the king's army, held his musket in a tight grip, grinding his teeth in anticipation. To my right stood Gaspard, a man with the body of a brawny sailor but he wore the clothes of his calling, those of a priest. He held the cross closely to his heaving chest and mumbled a quiet prayer. My grip tightened around the handle of my trusty rapier and the ancient scrolls of banishing I had gotten from the old alchemist in the catacomb felt strange to the touch. What was I doing here? It would seem almost perverse that I, François LeComb, a skilful but humble merchant, would venture into the lair of the Devil himself." At this point the players enter these characters for a short while to experience what once was.

Sometimes there are different outcomes that will affect the story of the "real" characters. In the example above a demonic vanquishing is about to take place. You could have two endings to this little story. One could be that the demon was vanquished but some of its essence lingered, creating a curse or stain of evil. The other alternative would entail the creature's survival. It might have killed all but one of the men, the author of the entry. This would mean that the "real" characters' fate would be somewhat decided by how they managed to play through the historical section. If they succeeded they would be up against a stain of evil or a curse, if they failed they would be up against the actual demon. It requires a little bit of work, but this method is surely a way to keep a story interesting.

If you use this technique correctly you can create very enticing and diverse stories. The players will definitely want to find more documents, as it is fun to experience something different. When you introduce characters from old documents you should use the Cast/NPC sheets, as they needn't be as detailed as a player character.

PROFILING YOUR PLAYERS

This is about being able to recognize the telltale signs your players display when they are really into the game. When someone is excited they show it. One player can be very subtle and might just bite his lip or widen his eyes a bit while another may raise his voice or start to fiddle with a pen or other object. These responses are reflexive, and most people don't even think about them. If you as a storyteller learn to spot them, you can greatly increase the quality of your game.

When you watch and learn these signs, and how they reveal themselves, you should immediately ask yourself one question: What just happened in the game? The player reacted to something that excited him, and if you learn to identify what makes a player tick you can use this in your stories. In the end, you will be able to shape stories so they address each and every player's reaction to in-game events.

If you are an experienced poker player you have a good head start since it is all about reading body language. You will be

able to see when a player is bored, excited or creeped out. This will also enable you to learn what makes chills run down the spines of your players. Most of us can see the more overt signs, but if you also learn to see the little ones and interpret them and adapt the events you can really make the players get into the game. It might seem a bit overzealous, but it can make your job a whole lot easier as well as creating an even more enjoyable game. There are a lot of good books on body language that could be of great use.

STYLES OF PLAY

The purpose of Noctum is that one should be able to play all kinds of styles within the genre. In essence, the cosmology of the game never changes, only what parts of it the characters experience and how the world is presented to them. Whatever style you employ, the truth of the hidden world will remain (if you don't want to change it that is).

As the characters have no idea what the secret world of Noctum hides they will believe what they experience and what they see. If you create an ancient religion, going back to the Incas for example, and adapt minions and relics to fit this religion (or create your own) as you present it to the players, they will think that it is the truth of the world presented in the game. As you know, some dark ones believe themselves to be creatures of myth, so even if you present the world using a religion created on the spot it is still coherent with the cosmology of the game.

To give some insight into how you may present the world of Noctum using different styles some examples will be provided. Different styles are played in different ways. In some, research and mysteries are pivotal while violence may be the center of attention in other types of styles. If the players are oblivious to the cosmology and game universe of Noctum they might become quite surprised. If they have played several stories using one of the styles and suddenly are made aware of something that speaks of an even greater truth, they will be intrigued. Many of the styles are good to use as an "introduction myth": first having the characters discover the false truths and then, slowly, start to bring in the real cosmology of Noctum.

Most storytellers find their own styles of play but these can act as inspiration. However, always see to it that your stories follow a certain style with some consistency, and if you decide to change the style you should make the transition smooth. Never let your stories jump from one style to another randomly, as this will feel way too sporadic and without focus. Even though you can play the game in a number of ways you have to decide on a general tone. If you don't set a certain style, and stick with it, both you and your players will risk feeling disconnected from the game. Having the same characters play through different stories put together by a patchwork of styles is probably not the best way of building up a consistent game universe. Changing styles can of course be used as a tool, but when doing so never "cut" from one style to another, rather fade into the new style in a way that feels natural to your

gameplay. Main point: If switching styles, make the switch a natural part of the development of your game universe and only do it if the players can feel at home with their characters in the new style.

ANCIENT GATE

When playing the ancient gate you should come up with old relics, myths and secrets. All creatures have a place in a pantheon and they are believed to watch us. From the beginning the world was theirs but the rise of man forced them back to a region of shadow and ashes. We had a soul and with that an immense power and they lacked the strength to withstand us in the end. Today, mankind has forgotten the battles and our power. Only a few humans are believed to have inherited the ability to fight the fiends of old (the gifted). As the soul is slowly dying in man the ancients grow stronger and some have crossed over to our world, looking for revenge.

The myth that is presented to the characters in this style of play speaks of the dark ones as a race that only wish to annihilate us as revenge for the exile humanity forced them into. Ancient archaeological findings, translation of obscure texts and tomes which contain arch glyphs suit this style. Violence is often low-key and investigations into bizarre occurrences and the solving of puzzles are on the menu.

Gates to the realm of shadow and ashes (the Coil) are hidden in far regions of the world, constructed by the crazed priests of old. The characters will travel a lot, rummaging through findings of anthropologists and archaeologists gone mad. Cults of doom, who collaborate with the ancients (Disciples or Unholy seem to fit the bill), lurk among humans, wishing to annihilate all of us in the name of their masters. The horror is that of suspense and of the utterly alien.

HACK & SLASH

Well, as the name suggests this style focuses on violence galore. The characters are really never given a cohesive myth or reason behind it all, they are just very unlucky and happen to run into death dwellers, monsters and insane masked killers wielding chainsaws. There are rarely any great plots or mysteries and the pace is fast and breathtaking. Finding something hard to bash the skulls of your foes with or finding extra ammo is the main thing.

When playing this type of game you should always use lesser dark ones, as using violence in this style solves most problems the players have to be able to kill the things they run across in order to stand a chance. Also, don't use the rule for hard hits when running a hack & slash story, characters tend to get banged up pretty good and if they die too easily it will be a short game session indeed.

The horror in this style isn't very refined or subtle. It is about slimy and dead walking things in the dark that jump out in front of you. Violent though the style may be, it doesn't have to be mindless. You should always have a cool story attached to the gore but it needn't be all that complicated. If you want to push this type of ultra violence to the limit players may be allowed to roll fate dice and multiply it by four; the score is the number of extra bullets they "find" in their pockets or close by. Could come in handy when that hoard of death dwellers break down the door, especially if the characters are fresh out of ammo. You should make limited resources a part of these types of stories. Also, you may have characters heal fatal hit points at a rate of one per twelve hours. You may even go further when dealing with damage in this style and cut all damage (that the characters sustain) in half if the lead is flying by the buckets in your Hack & Slash stories.

LEGIONS OF HELL

Demons, exorcisms and the end of the world stuff are the main things in this style. This is an old classic. The dark ones and what the character learns of them are presented through the lens of Biblical scripture. Demons wish to corrupt mankind and create hell on earth. Use the creatures that believe they are demons in this style. Hostis is excellent to use as the main adversary. Agnus Dei may also be tossed into the mix further down the road if it suits your story. Hellholes in the Coil are good when you want to take the characters for a ride in hell.

In Legions of Hell you can have an equal amount of violence and intellectual problem solving, or make more use of one of them. Make the characters aware of the presence of evil in the world in a way that would make them believe the end is near. It is often even more powerful if at least one of the characters is devoted to a faith. Theological discussion and questions of faith should be weaved into the story and in game dialogue.

Make them feel surrounded by evil and they see the hand of Satan in all bad things. Has God left humanity? Will we perish under the heavy weight of the infernal forces that so desperately try to lead us astray? Portents, omens, an evil child believed to be the Antichrist are perfect to make this style of play come to life. If the characters square off against demons they will probably use holy water and crosses to ward them off. Imagine their surprise when they run across their first dark one who doesn't bow under the faith of man. Priceless.

If you want to go all out, in an action-riddled "graphic novel" kind of way, you may include such things as bullets with holy water, blessed weaponry and the like. In this setting, being an ordained priest is a powerful thing indeed.





MOROSE MIROIR

In essence: A mirror grown gloomy. The Morose Miroir style deals with ominous and horrible alternate dimensions. An atrocious crime or sin might be the source of these occurrences. A small town holds a secret, something terrible has happened and the evil and injustice have brought forth a dark alternate reality of the place. When it twists the community becomes void of people, decrepit and desolated. Unnatural creatures stalk the shadows and the very surroundings reflect the residing evil.

Morose Miroir can be played in many ways but the Coil is pivotal to this style. Characters can wake up in their hotel room, finding it distorted, terrible and otherworldly. They soon realize they cannot get out and even if they can see people through their windows and peephole, they cannot seem to be heard or seen themselves. Beyond this, the windows and doors seem impossible to break. Later on, they might find a vent that allows them to get out of the room, only to discover that this leads to another confined and even more terrible location. They have to find the clues and solve the puzzles in order to become free, maybe even confronting demons from their past or the dark halves of themselves.

Insanity, Nether of Nightmares and Domains of Time are great tools to employ when making this style spring to life. Maybe a visit to the hospital is more to your liking as you make use of a Site of Sickness to make the Morose Miroir reflect a horrible truth.

Creatures are often half-breeds born from human cruelty and misery. Violence and action play their part but the violence and the action is in most cases more nerve-racking and frightening than deadly. Puzzles and clues are a must and in many cases there is only a limited amount of time given to find out how to get free by solving the mysteries. The surroundings and minions should inspire a maddening and visceral fear in their overwhelming perversity.

PARANORMAL

The Paranormal style is all about keeping a low profile on the horrors. Everything is subtle and for the most part the characters are unsure if the events really were supernatural or not. Haunted houses, curses and psychics fit well in this style.

Use shadows, eerie sounds and tricks of the eye to keep the players on their toes.

Absolute conformation should never be given, making the characters even more zealous to find the "truth". Branch 94 is excellent to use as "men in black" who constantly thwart the efforts of the characters and steal that roll of film with a blurry snapshot of something hairy that could have been a werewolf... or Bigfoot... or a Wendigo.

If you really want to push the envelope you can drop a Spawn in a lake and then you have a lake monster to take some more blurry photos of. Scientific problem solving is

often pivotal and violence is mostly low-key. If you want shootouts you may just toss a couple of people, driven mad by an Ocul or possessed by a lesser demon, at the characters. Travels are often important since characters have to track and investigate rumors and urban legends. The most a character will see of the Coil is distortions, which often resemble poltergeist activity (bleeding walls and such) or maybe they dream of a Nether of Nightmares.

THRILLER

In Thriller it is all about serial killers, passions turned to obsessions and sadistic crimes. When playing Thriller there should only be hints of the supernatural. Twisted conspiracies involving murder, incest and betrayal is always a good way to make things dark and scary.

Serial killers and the profiler almost live in symbiosis. The killer needs the attention of the profiler and the profiler descends into madness as he tries to get into the killer's mind, living for little else than the hunt, forsaking his loved ones. Extra attention and effort should be put in when crafting NPCs as most have their own motives and there will be a lot of interaction. Thrillers are good to play as dark modern "whodunnits" in an "Agatha Christien" type way.

Problem solving is often very crucial and handled on a social level as the characters get involved with suspects and their families. It is also possible that a killer, who for some reason has become fixated on the characters, will stalk them. It is a cruel game of cat and mouse. Paranoia and claustrophobia are good themes to use.

The Coil seldom comes into play but Bogeymen and Urgelings are excellent to use as adversaries, as are stains of evil. As the story progresses the characters will start to unravel the hidden world as strange patterns begin to emerge, pointing to evil as a sentient force. Make them feel as if they are watched and that their loved ones are but one step away of becoming involved in the sick game of a demented madman.

URBAN FANTASY

All of the characters should be gifted; they have either psychic abilities or rituals at their disposal. When the game begins most characters will have some insight that something is wrong with the world and they try to find out what. They use their abilities to find answers and to stay alive.

A good way to use Urban Fantasy is to make all characters latent gifted. They have no powers when they begin the game, starting out very much as average Joes and then something happens. They walk down the wrong twisted alley and see parts of the hidden world. In Noctum the power of the psychics is genetic and maybe these genes kick in when they confront that which threatens all

mankind. Those who will become gifted with magic will find old notes and books that have belonged to a relative and they start to find out old truths that have been hidden in their family for generations.

More and more they find themselves disconnected from the world and those they love. They have seen things and they themselves have become changed. How will they use their power, for good or for evil? Why do they have these powers?

Urban Fantasy should be set in a large city. Slums, old sewers and gritty street settings should be the main playground. Depending on preference, you may let characters regain 8 essence points every day and 12 if they meditate, enabling them to use their powers more frequently. Also, you may cut the time it takes to perform rituals by half. If you want the setting to be even more "fantasy" you can create "hot spots". In these places it is much easier to use rituals and psychic abilities. However, to balance it you may also have "cold spots" which are the opposite, and connect these phenomena to myths of your own design. Count the levels of all powers as one higher and reduce the essence cost by a third when using hot spots. In cold spots the level is counted as one lower and the essence cost is increased by a third.

Styx, Branch 94, The Hidden and Agnus Dei who wish to capture the characters in order to make them part of their sick breeding program if they are psychics, are very suitable for this style, as well as

Violence, investigations and bizarre encounters are very much a part of Urban Fantasy. The dark ones and the Coil may be used in any way you wish. It all depends on what you want the players to experience. Oculs and spirits capable of possessing piles of junk and devices in order to create a partly physical form are very much in line with Urban Fantasy.

WICKED CITY

Political corruption, organized crime and strange rumors are the key in pulling this off. The Wicked City style centers on a large metropolis run by crooked politicians and the mob. Life is cheap and trigger-happy enforcers roam the streets. It is a dark and unforgiving world indeed. Those on the top can get away with just about anything.

The characters get dragged into shootouts in the rainy street, they witness horrible crimes and become hunted. Illegal gambling houses, brothels, alluring femme fatales and drug dens are a big part of the setting. Everyone owes loyalty to someone and it is hard to know whom to trust.

The Government and the law are in the background, a big dark uncaring gray machine and it is every man for himself. But strange things are happening and rumors of the most bizarre things float around. They have found entire mob crews ripped to shreds; all were armed and had apparently been shooting at shadows when they died. Even the most hardened criminal avoids some alleys.

In Wicked City violence is a big part and should be hard and horrible but a common tool. The characters should be able to handle themselves somewhat. Magic and psychic abilities are seldom used in this style of play and the Coil is mostly absent. When using dark ones, only lesser ones should come into play. They stalk the back alleys hunting for prey, walking the line between man and monster. A Mendroloth or demon in the guise of one of the city's most powerful crime bosses is very fitting, as well as the Cabal and Hidden. It is dark, cold and hard. You only survive as long as you are fast on the trigger and nurture a healthy paranoia.

HUNTERS OF EVIL

Hunters of Evil is a mode and a style of play. Here the characters are, or soon will become, privy to the fact that something inhuman and evil stalks the Earth and they actively search it out and destroy it. They are probably not alone in the battle and work through a loosely connected network of other hunters. But the hunters don't see the whole picture. They believe that demons indeed come from hell, Flesh Dolls are viewed as a modern version of ghouls and Forsaken are believed to be a form of revenants. Toss in a Gesoid and you have a modern day techno demon. The original mythology of the game never changes but how it is displayed and viewed differs as the characters have their own more classical view of the otherworldly.

In this setting you should allow for hunters to use the skills Occult and Parapsychology to research how to deal with different entities as other hunters and occultists have crossed path with these beings before. Weapons, homemade contraptions such as ad-hock flamethrowers will be quite common, as will different arch glyphic relics and rituals that can be used to deal with creatures. Characters are very likely to have bags of salt, iron rods, magnesium flares, holy water and shotgun shells packed with rock salt in their arsenal, as well as different exorcism rituals and symbols. Using spirits and Oculi in your stories gives you a near inexhaustible range of critters as you can modify them as you see fit. This mode and style mixes the horridly occult with a good measure of gore, investigations, action and dark humor. It is also a struggle for the characters as this kind of living wears a person down and cuts them off from most other humans. It is not like they can tell the world as there is never any evidence left, and the world would probably panic anyway. And as it is hard to keep a day job they need to find other ways to finance their hunt for evil.

The characters will seldom travel to the coil, mostly it is in the background serving as the realm of the dead when dealing with ghosts and hell when demons are afoot. Possessions, stains of evil and curses are very common. Take inspiration from movies, books and comics such as *Hellblazer*, *Thirteen Ghosts*, *Supernatural* and the creepier episodes of *X-Files* that deals with the occult, paranormal and mutants.

***It's Very Human:** There are unearthly forces, horrific realms of the unknown and dark mysteries from beyond, but in the end, Noctum is about humanity. The darkness (in its pure form) only wishes to survive, it is only a cosmic coincidence that they feed on energies brought forth by the evil and suffering of others. Pure darkness is very much a neutral force that searches for nourishment. It is incapable of sadism, as pure darkness has no emotion, but as darkness has taken on aspects of humanity, the lesser ones, half-breeds and defiled (and the weaker full bloods Alsekthaals), take pleasure in the suffering of others in the same way a human can. A dark one can never be any crueler than a human since we have taught them how. The difference is that the dark energies give them a lot more power and opportunity to relish in it.*

It is good to take a step back from time to time; playing stories that only involve humans without any influence of the dark ones. The cruelty of mankind is enough to create chilling and horrible tales. In some ways it might even be scarier at times since this reflects the real world. Your neighbor can be a serial killer or child molester. A psychotic maniac may actually shoot you when you are buying milk in the local grocery store. Disgruntled kids, driven to the brink of madness and psychotic breakdowns by bullies, may start shooting all over the place. Sadly these things happen. We have terrorism, corruption, organized crime, underground snuff porn (according to some) and all kinds of horrible happenings. Sometimes, all you need is humanity to weave a horrendous story.

When connecting your stories to our world in such a way you should do so with care and respect. Some players may have issues with having too much of the horrors of the real world in the game. Always discuss these things with your players. Some may take offence when playing a story involving certain subjects. Respect everyone involved when playing. You should feel a bit scared when playing a horror game but you should never be uncomfortable or otherwise disturbed for real. Respect your players and respect yourself.

TIME TRAVELING

As with one-shots, this is a mode of play. Why not set the game in a different time? What was the darkness up to in the 1930s? Some sects and organizations didn't even exist back then but others were sure to be around. Maybe you want to play the game during the 1700s? This is also a period that allows for a lot of interesting stories. What about alchemy? Gifted were probably using that as a way to affect the world.

When you set your stories in a different time some problems do arise. Skills are different as well as equipment and stereotypes. Well, a little research has never harmed anyone so it is recommended that you hit the books to get a feel for the time. It isn't that hard to come up with damage and functions of older weapons. Take flintlock pistols for example, they would take about 4 rounds to reload, a heavy one would do about 5 points worth of damage and a smaller would do about 3.

EXPERIENCE POINTS (XP)

As the characters develop they become better at Skills and hone their Aptitudes. When handing out experience points you should use moderation and fairness. The characters shouldn't become too skilled right off, but they shouldn't be held back too much either. It is a delicate balance. There are some criteria you can use when deciding how many experience points a player may get. After each story experience points are awarded.

I'M HERE

Every player should be awarded for their effort and be given 1 XP.

ROLE-PLAY

The player (or players) who acted out their characters particularly well should be rewarded for this. Only reward those deserving. A player should get between 1 to 2 XP for acting abilities. Some players are a bit shy; if they still try their best you should reward them as well for their hard work.

ON THE LINE

If a character puts his neck out for another character or important NPC the player should get rewarded for this. Understand that this doesn't have to involve heroism as such. If a character risks his life in order to murder a heavily protected witness that may bring down the other characters that counts as well. Only when real risk have been taken to help another should this be awarded and never confuse stupidity and a death wish with effort. 1 XP should be rewarded.

WITHIN AN INCH OF THEIR LIVES

A player whose character suffers staggering amounts of damage and pulls through should get a pat on the back. Give them 1 XP for this.

SUCCESS

If the characters come through the story and resolve it in a satisfactory way each player should be given 1 XP. Don't award anyone who didn't pitch in though.

ELEMENTARY MR. WATSON

If a player comes up with a very smart strategy or figures out vital and important clues on his own he deserves a reward. Give him 1 XP for this.

WHAT STUFF COSTS

Some things are more expensive than others. Aptitudes cost more than skills for example. When spending experience points a multiplier is used. Most things cost their current rating multiplied by a number. If a player wishes to buy two more points in a skill he first has to buy one rank using the multiplier and then buy the second one multiplying it by the amount of total skill points invested.

At most a character may have a score of 5 and no more in a Skill or an Aptitude. Remember that the secondary aptitudes will change as well when the primary aptitudes are increased.

Experience Table

Fate Points: 2 (maximum 5)

Aptitude dot: 8

Fourth or Fifth dot in Aptitudes: 10

Training: 6

Skill Point: 5

Fourth or Fifth dot in a Skill: 6

Essence per dot: 2 (max 100)

Next Ritual Level: 6

New Ritual: Essence cost/3

New Psychic Abilities Per Magnitude

Lesser: 8

Substantial: 12

Greater: 18

LEARNING NEW RITUALS

When learning new rituals the character first needs to find them. They are often hard to come by. The character then needs to study the ritual. Studying a new ritual requires a Brains + Occult roll. The negative modifier equals the number of successes needed to use the ritual. And the occultist must spend an equal amount of hours in on studying the ritual as the ritual costs in essence. The cost of the ritual in experience points equals the essence cost divided by three.

PSYCHIC ABILITIES

Psychic abilities are tricky and only the storyteller may decide if a gifted may get another one. You should be very careful when deciding upon this since having two abilities can make a character too powerful. Characters that don't have the gift from the beginning might be able to get access to abilities. They should have an essence of at least forty. It all comes down to what kind of story you are running. If you want to you may allow characters to buy new powers per magnitude instead of giving them the full ability. If you use this system powers start out at the Lesser magnitude. See the experience table.

PLAUSIBLE DEVELOPMENT

When players are going to spend their XP to buy new skills, aptitudes and powers they shouldn't be allowed to buy whatever strikes their fancy. In order for a player to be allowed to use experience they have to motivate why they would be allowed to buy the things they are buying. It is very unlikely that a character suddenly would be a master gunslinger if he hasn't fired a gun in his entire life. Only let them spend XP on things their characters have used or practiced during the story (or between stories if credible). If a player wants his character to learn Occult from scratch he damn better let his character read some books during gameplay.

3798, what the hell does that mean! Is it part of a phone number or an address? It took a while but after I got around to burning the last few little fuckers I got to the one I was looking for. A kid, yeah right! That social worker gave me some grief but I shut him up good! Nothing says "I love you" like a crowbar in the teeth! Anyway, that little "girl" gave me that number. If I just could know when and where to use it.

I knew that little shit had it right, 3798! It was a goddamn code. I've been down here for hours, the bulkheads closed behind me but that's okay. I saw my wife again, she shouldn't even be alive, but that was easily remedied. It wasn't really her anyway. I hate these goddamn tunnels! You hear funny stuff down here, but it can't be far now.

I lost three days; the really freaky thing is that my wife is *STILL* alive. I woke up in my bed and all was as it should be, but I know it ain't. She's just a meat puppet! They watch me, wanna see what I will do. I'll fucking show'em! My wife won't be back from work until late afternoon, which will give me plenty of time to prepare. I already took care of my "dog". I had to wrestle with it for quite a while. I don't know what the hell they do to them but the meat puppets go all haywire and berserk. Finally I got it into the dryer. I'll let it spin around for a while and then the little asshole might be ready to talk.

This can't be right, I know my thoughts but now I'm in my wife's body! My own body chased me all over my house, thinking I was my wife! How the hell does that happen? I got away and I'm heading to the asylum. My wife works there and as I have her body there shouldn't be a problem getting in. I know she has hid something there, maybe one of the puppeteers!

Goddamnit! I had no idea that John was going to be there too, I mean me, or at least everyone thinks it's me since it is running around in my body. I have to get a weapon, my wife's body is much weaker than mine and I keep getting the shit kicked out of me! The orphanage thing was all over the news, that little torch-job was quite frowned upon, what the hell do they know. Well, a good thing is that the cops are looking for me, or my old body that is. Since I'm not in it anymore I guess that will buy me some time. And no, I couldn't find shit in the asylum.

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BUREAU OF IDENTIFICATION

Credit History ☐
 APB/Arrest Report ☐
 Missing Persons Report ☐
 General Background Check ☐
 Criminal Background Check ☐

City:
 County:
 File Requested By:
(Name and Title/Occupation)
 Department/Institution/Branch:
(Police, Welfare, Hospital, Civilian etc).

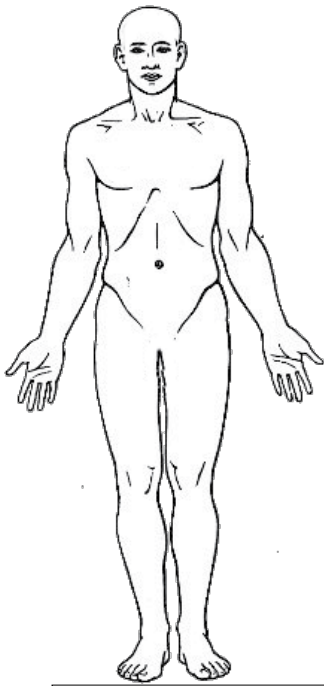
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Aliases:																							
Addendums		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;"> <p>RIGHT</p> <p>LEFT</p> </div> <div style="width: 60%;"> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%; height: 60px;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; height: 60px;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; height: 60px;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; height: 60px;"></td> <td style="width: 20%; height: 60px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thumb</td> <td>Index</td> <td>Middle</td> <td>Ring</td> <td>Pinky</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="height: 60px;"></td> <td style="height: 60px;"></td> <td style="height: 60px;"></td> <td style="height: 60px;"></td> <td style="height: 60px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thumb</td> <td>Index</td> <td>Middle</td> <td>Ring</td> <td>Pinky</td> </tr> </table> </div> </div>							Thumb	Index	Middle	Ring	Pinky						Thumb	Index	Middle	Ring	Pinky
Thumb	Index	Middle	Ring	Pinky																			
Thumb	Index	Middle	Ring	Pinky																			
Disposition:																							
Crime Report/ Notes:																							
Previous Criminal History																							
Arresting Officer:	Case No.	Place of Arrest	Date	Charge	Sentence																		

[illegible]

Medical Examiner:
City:
County:
Date:
Time:

Case No.	Scars/Marks/Tattoos	Partly Clothed: <input type="checkbox"/> Unclothed: <input type="checkbox"/> Clothed: <input type="checkbox"/> Type of Death Poor Health: <input type="checkbox"/> Accidental: <input type="checkbox"/> Homicide: <input type="checkbox"/> Natural: <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide: <input type="checkbox"/> Undetermined: <input type="checkbox"/> (If Vehicular Accident) Pedestrian: <input type="checkbox"/> Passenger: <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown: <input type="checkbox"/> Driver: <input type="checkbox"/>
Name of Deceased:		
Identified By:		
SSN:		
Gender:		
Ethnicity:		
Nationality:		
Complexion:		
Age:		
Date of Birth:	Toxicology	
Address:		
Occupation:		
Build/Height:		
Weight:		
Eyes/Hair: /		
Found By:		
Liver Temp:		
TOD:		
Blood Type:		
Wounds/Condition:		
Probable Cause of Death:		

Figure A



Notes

Figure B

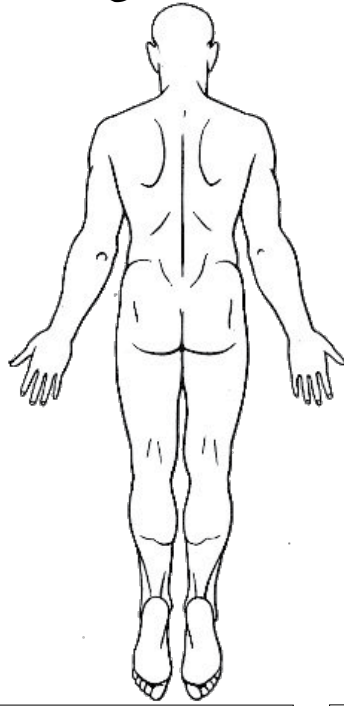
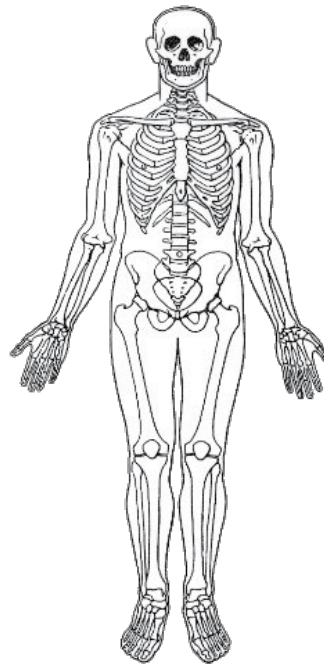


Figure C



Notes

Figure D

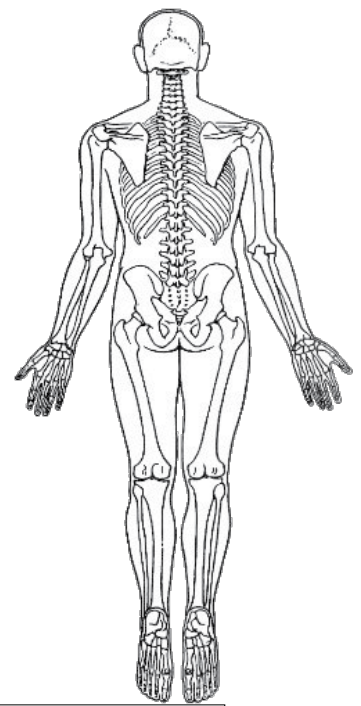


Figure E



Notes

Figure F

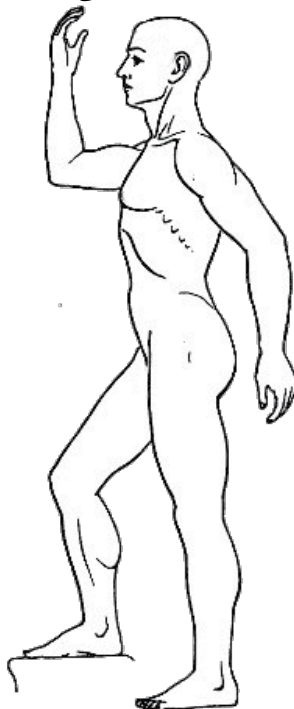
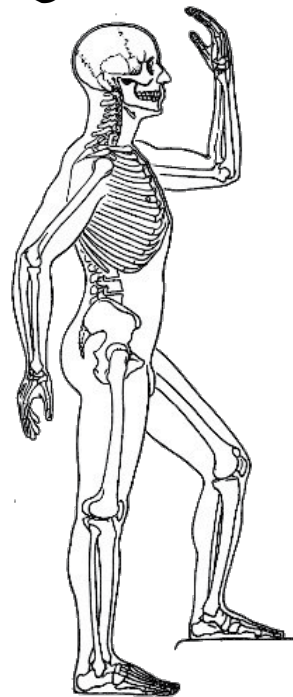


Figure G



Notes

Figure H



Character Sheet

Age: 5

Attention	● 0 0 0 0	Movement:
Brains	● 0 0 0 0	Defense:
Brawn	● 0 0 0 0	Finances:
Clout	● 0 0 0 0	Essence:
Cool	● 0 0 0 0	
at Feeling	● 0 0 0 0	FATE:
Quickness	● 0 0 0 0	
Reaction	● 0 0 0 0	

Academics	00000	Forensics	00000	Repairs	00000
Athletics	00000	Interrogation	00000	Rhetoric	00000
Close Combat	00000	Investigation	00000	Science	00000
Computers	00000	Law	00000	Search	00000
Contacts	00000	Medicine	00000	Security	00000
Cryptography	00000	Occult	00000	Shooting	00000
Deprogramming	00000	Parapsychology	00000	Stealth	00000
Fast Talk	00000	Photo & Film	00000	Streetwise	00000
First Aid	00000	Psychology	00000	Survival	00000
Focus	00000	Red Tape	00000	Vehicle	00000

BASHING OOOOOOOOOOOOOO
 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

FATAL 00000000000000000000

[illegible]

O Peaceful - _____ P
O Composed - _____ S
O Uptight - _____ Y
O Anxious - _____ C
O Worried - _____ H
O Stressed - _____ E
O Strained - _____ P
O Disturbed - _____ O
O Anguished - _____ I
O Tormented - _____ N
T
S

AGITATED	UPSET	ENRAGED	RABID	BERSERK
ATTENTION(+1):	ATTENTION(+1):	ATTENTION(+2):	ATTENTION(+2):	ATTENTION(+2):
BRAWN	BRAWN	BRAWN(+1):	BRAWN(+2):	BRAWN(+3):
COOL	COOL(+1):	COOL(+1):	COOL(+2):	COOL(+2):
REACTION	REACTION(+1):	REACTION(+1):	REACTION(+2)	REACTION(+3)

[illegible]

Type/Mod	DMG	Range	ROF	Clip

Gifted Sheet

Psychic Powers

Type

Magnitude	Cost	Successes
-----------	------	-----------

Rituals

Type

Level

Cost

Successes

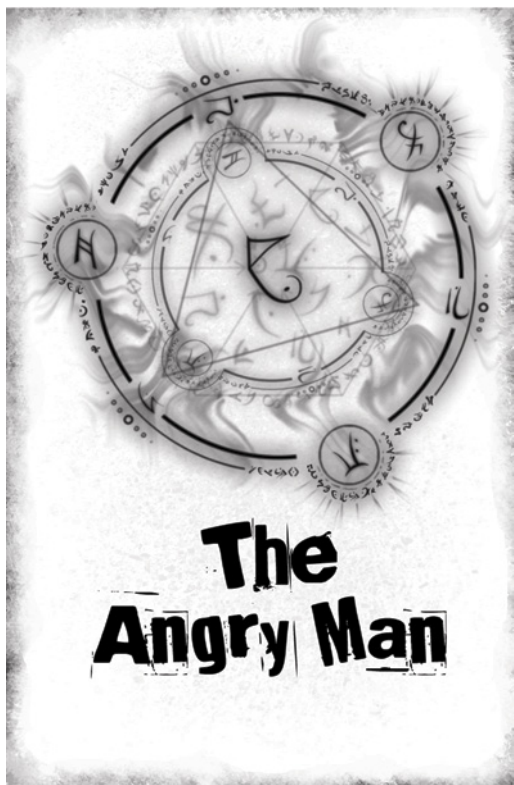
Foci

Time

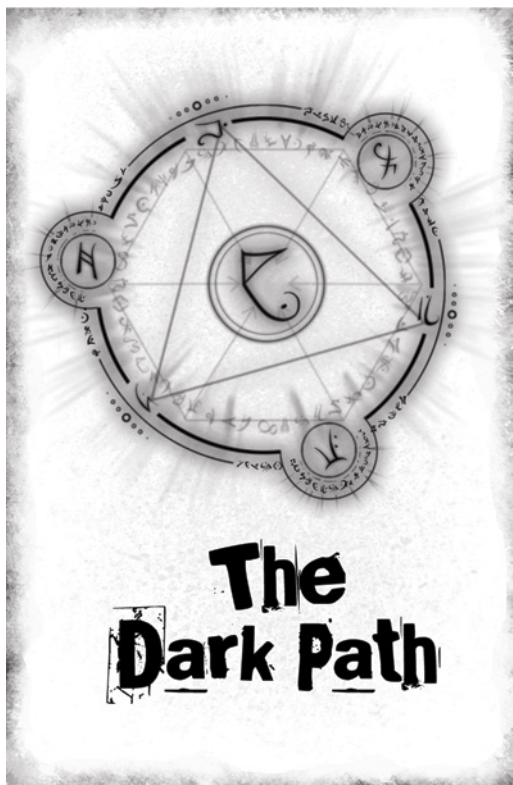
Circle of Understanding:

Aspect Descriptions

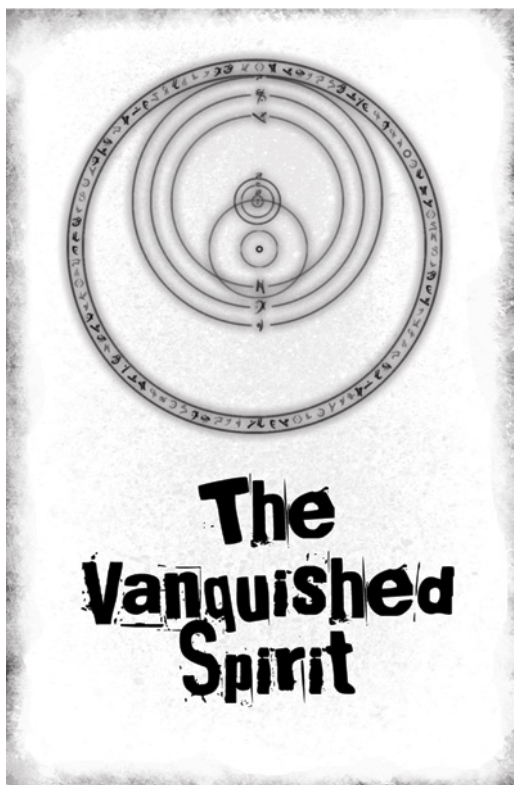
Active Aspect:



The Angry Man



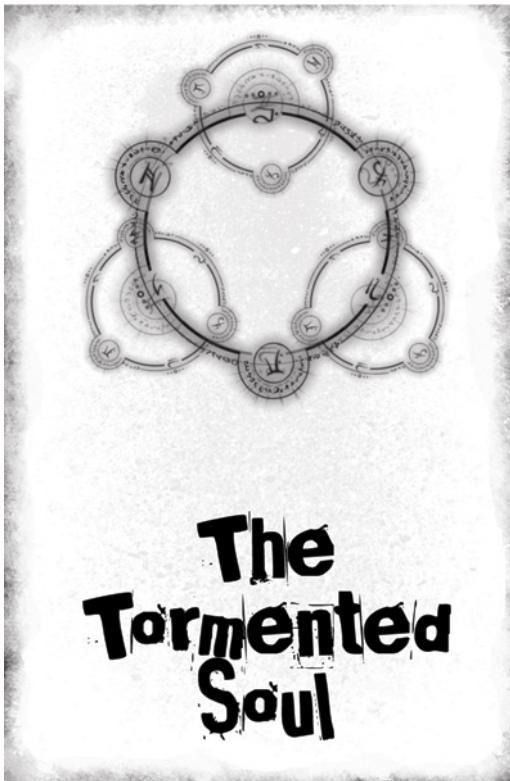
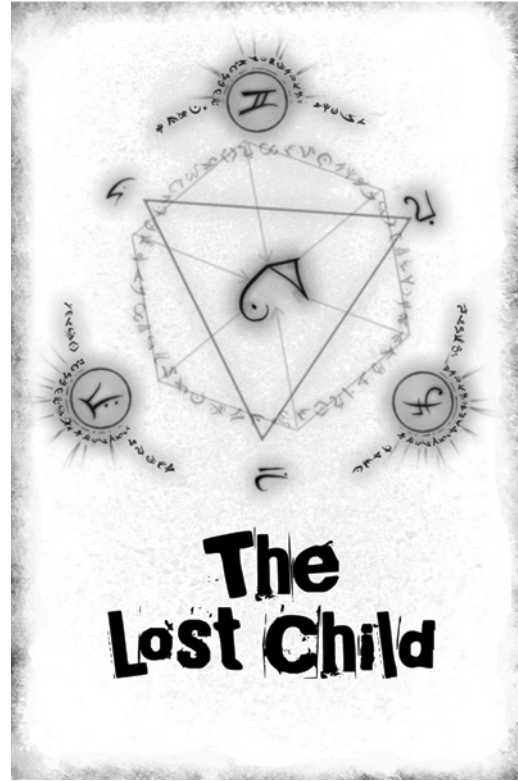
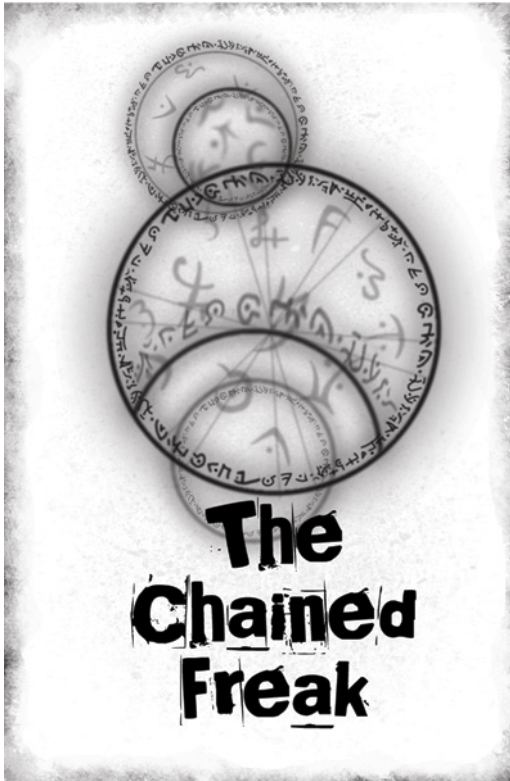
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